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RECORDINGS & EVENTS *A special eight-page section for readers in the US and Canada*

GRAMOPHONE *talks to...*

Kimiko Ishizaka

The German-Japanese pianist on her *Well-Tempered Clavier* recording

Prior to recording *The Well-Tempered Clavier, Book 1* and, before that, the *Goldbergs*, you weren't playing much...

I had been a chamber musician with my two brothers in Germany. We had a good career but I felt I needed a new beginning. I wanted to do sports competitively so, when I was 25, I started powerlifting and then weightlifting. I trained a huge amount and came second at the German Nationals. I'm still proud of that.

How did you come to start playing again?

I kept practising the entire time, even though I didn't have a lot of public performances, and a true miracle happened: I discovered a new piano technique. In my early 20s, I had very thin arms – I couldn't get a beautiful sound out of the piano and I got very tired playing, say, two Chopin études in a row. As I got stronger, I found a way of using my shoulders, arms and back to produce the sound. These days, I only use my fingers for support.

Around 400 fans contributed to your *Goldbergs* recording, which you gave away...

I was 30 when I discovered Bach through the *Goldberg Variations* but, although I was playing

better than I ever had, I was only playing in very small concerts. I decided that by sharing this music online, for free, people might start hiring me to play on stage again.

Some 1000 fans contributed to your *Well-Tempered Clavier* recording...

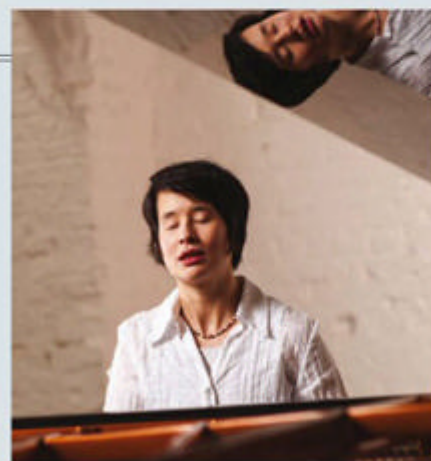
I've raised the bar with everything this time around, so we needed more funding. You can pay for it or not; on Bandcamp, for example, people can listen to it for free but actually it turns out that every fourth or fifth person likes it so much that they pay for it.

How did you prepare for this recording?

I spent nearly the whole first year approaching the pieces at my desk rather than at the piano. I linked everything back to the theme in the fugue, and then I learned how the fugues were related to the preludes – I believe they always are. The next step was finding a way of doing my articulations so that the link became apparent to the listener.

You practise in the dark...

I know I listen to myself better. Because of the way I shape the phrases with my arms and



shoulders, I get a physical feeling for what I'm doing, and the dark is completely distraction-free for me. I do keep a flashlight next to the piano in case I forget something, though.

You omit the sustaining pedal in your Bach...

Regardless of how many 'voices' there are, each has to have its own articulation. I realised that as soon as I put my foot down, even for a second, I would disturb something that was happening in one of the other voices. So I found a way of playing *legato* without the pedal.

Do you still lift weights?

As long as I aim to play the piano at my present level, I will keep training. I have 265lb of weights in my living room, and that's where I go when I'm done practising for the day.

JS Bach

Das wohltemperirte Clavier, Book 1, BWV846-869

Kimiko Ishizaka *pf*

Navona © ② NV5993 (108' • DDD)



The fact that Kimiko Ishizaka is an award-winning weightlifter might not make her an obvious candidate to honour some of Bach's most transcendent music. But once her recording of *The Well-Tempered Clavier* Book 1 enters your ears, it's evident she's up to this weighty assignment. Ishizaka plays the

24 preludes and fugues with impeccable taste and technique, finding many levels of musical meaning even as she brings utmost clarity to the multiplicity of textures.

She performs on a Bösendorfer 280, an instrument that can swallow Bach whole if the artist doesn't have exceptional control of a nine-foot concert grand. Ishizaka avoids simulating a harpsichord, unlike some pianists in these pieces, but she also never comes across as a fire-breathing virtuoso. She scales her Bach to the rhythmic, structural and sonic needs of the music, without touching the sustaining pedal. Her articulation runs the sensitive gamut from cushioned to biting crisp.

It is in the fugues where Ishizaka goes furthest in demonstrating how intimate she has become with Bach. Each line has a transparent place in the scheme of unfolding things, and the pianist seems to take enormous pleasure in weaving together all of the miraculous strands.

In a note in the booklet, Ishizaka says she practises 'almost exclusively in total darkness', an environment that helps her 'become the listener instead of the pianist'. However she achieves her goal, Ishizaka plays these compact monuments with intense and shapely finesse. Playing in darkness has led her to illuminating views of Bach.

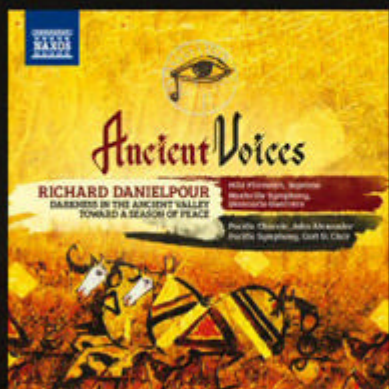
Donald Rosenberg

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Nashville Symphony
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Pacific Symphony
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mystery, sweeping gestures, deeply
moving elegies, and awesome climaxes...*”

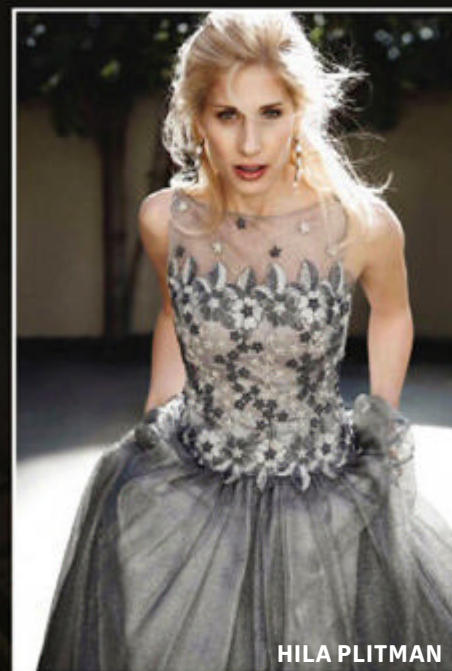
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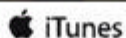
“
*Hila Plitmann, possessed
of shimmering tone and
seemingly effortless
breath control, creates
an engrossing, deeply
human portrait.*”

-OPERA NEWS



HILA PLITMAN

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'A series of engrossing, sympathetic and intense conversations': the Los Angeles based Calidore Quartet perform Haydn and Mendelssohn

Feldman

Piano, Violin, Viola, Cello

Aleck Karis *pf* Curtis Macomber *vn*

Danielle Farina *va* Christopher Finckel *vc*

Bridge © BRIDGE9446 (75' • DDD)



The mere 75 minutes of Morton Feldman's last work, *Piano, Violin, Viola, Cello*, receive a

rapt performance from pianist Aleck Karis and three friends. It captures the quality that most endears the American minimalist to his adoring fans: the courage to take on the establishment with music that moves slowly and quietly through micro-harmonic interstices and lasts as long as six hours (his String Quartet No 2). *Piano, Violin, Viola, Cello* employs a combination of instruments that Feldman used only once before, 12 years earlier in his eight-minute long *Four Instruments*. It is a suitable combination for impersonal, thoughtful sounds that may or may not be interdependent. In this last attempt to sketch the unsketchable with his refined range of elegant, concise gestures, Feldman has once again discovered and shared a musical universe for which there is no verbal road map.

The pay-off for newcomers or listeners who take a cooler view of Feldman, beyond his awesome stretching of time and space, is the sheer purity that radiates out at times, which William Bland described so perfectly

in *The New Grove Dictionary* in 1980 as 'washing a period of time with a general hue'. The still, suitably aerated recording was made in Conrad Prebys Hall at the University of California at San Diego, where Karis is a Distinguished Professor of Piano. Only the brief booklet-notes, while perhaps philosophically aligned with Feldman's music, disappoint. **Laurence Vittes**

Haydn • Mendelssohn

Haydn String Quartet, 'Emperor', Op 76 No 3

Mendelssohn String Quartet No 2, Op 13

Calidore Quartet

Colburn School © (55' • DDD)



The world is filled with excellent quartets, and here comes another, whose debut disc

features elegant and vibrant performances of works by Haydn and Mendelssohn. The Calidore Quartet, formed in 2010 at the Colburn Conservatory in Los Angeles, derives its name from the words California and *doré*, French for 'golden'.

Whatever their name may imply, the Calidore players are the epitome of confidence and finesse. They collaborate as if engaged in a series of engrossing, sympathetic and intense conversations – so much the better to characterise the qualities in the music on their stands. In Haydn's *Emperor* Quartet, the musicians are

keenly attentive to the surprising changes in mood and harmonic colour. Among the score's jolts is the second movement, the source of its subtitle, *Emperor*. Haydn wrote the theme for Emperor Francis II but it has long been better known as the German national anthem. The Calidore delineate the theme and variations with superb shading before moving vividly on to the work's final two movements.

Flexibility, warmth and drama are hallmarks of their account of Mendelssohn's A minor Quartet. An astonishingly mature achievement for an 18-year-old, the piece gives the Calidore many opportunities to revel in poetic and propulsive writing. The players are as touching in the tender lines of the second movement as they are expressive and urgent in its fugal phrases: for this alone, the group's splendid recorded debut is worth possessing. **Donald Rosenberg**

Hovhaness

Prelude and Quadruple Fugue, Op 128.

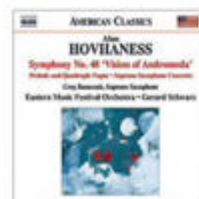
Soprano Saxophone Concerto, Op 344^a.

Symphony No 48, 'Vision of Andromeda', Op 355

^aGreg Banaszak *ssax* Eastern Music

Festival Orchestra / Gerard Schwarz

Naxos American Classics © 8 559755 (56' • DDD)



The three works by Alan Hovhaness on this new Naxos CD seem to have entered into a

"Crystal is a unique and specialized label featuring outstanding soloists" – Fanfare



The Moerae concerns the **Fate** of humanity: the 3 "Moerae" are spirits from Greek mythology. They spin the thread of life, measure it, and cut it when they please. Dan Welcher's new work for flute, oboe, bassoon, and piano demonstrates this drama. **Fire** is displayed by the intensity of this piece and the thrilling Quintets by American composers Alvin Etler and Dan Welcher. – **CD790**

The Westwood Wind Quintet has *"a standard of ensemble playing that is nothing short of breathtaking"* (International Record Review) and is *"a complete and completely satisfying musical experience."* (Robert Shaw, conductor)

Other acclaimed recordings by the Westwood Wind Quintet include:



CD601: Nielsen & Hindemith Quintets plus Divertimento for oboe, clarinet, & bassoon by **Erwin Schulhoff**. *"I cannot imagine a better performance than the one given here by the Westwood Wind Quintet."* (High Fidelity Magazine) Two of the best-known works for quintet plus a delightful piece by Erwin Schulhoff.



CD759: "The Westwood Wind Quintet offers yet another tour de force. [The pieces] touch all the bases, from reflective to rollicking and from reassuring to gently subversive. The group plays with both virtuosity and remarkable empathy throughout." (Intl. Rcd. Review) Exciting music by Tschemberdschi, Ripper, Berger, Hartley, and Kosins.



CD750: Barber Summer Music; **Ligeti** Six Bagatelles; **Mathias** Quintet, **Carlson** Nightwings. *"a recording which, equally good in tone quality, balance and clarity, can also be described as superlative."* (Gramophone) These pieces are "classics" in Quintet literature. The Westwood Wind Quintet captures them in all their glory.



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James Levine
Zubin Mehta
Gianandrea Noseda
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NESPRESSO

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blossom communication



parallel universe in which classical music plays a meditative role susceptible to national and regional influences, in which colour, arc and serenity are the key imperatives, and for which Gerard Schwarz is the perfect conductor. The highlight is Hovhaness's Saxophone Concerto, in which Greg Banaszak milks the tone and timbre of his unaccountably neglected solo instrument in an irresistible series of romantic episodes, evocative at times of Tchaikovsky in his exotic *Nutcracker* mode. Each of the three movements includes diverting episodes and ingenious structural devices; the first, for example, ends unexpectedly with a quiet, genuinely moving fugue.

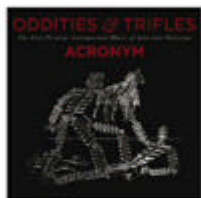
The disc starts off with *Prelude and Quadruple Fugue*, Op 128, a short but sumptuous *tour de force* written for Howard Hanson and the Eastman-Rochester Symphony Orchestra to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the Festival of American Music in 1954. Symphony No 48, *Vision of Andromeda*, however, commissioned in 1980 by the New England Conservatory of Music and here receiving its first recording, stretches out too comfortably into its half-hour length. Still, it's so seamlessly constructed that while it may be easy to lose the musical thread, it's easy to jump back in.

The Eastern Music Festival Orchestra is excellent throughout and the booklet-notes by Hinako Fujihara Hovhaness, the composer's sixth wife, provide inimitable insights such as: 'Travelling into the galaxy of Andromeda was an endless journey – so he wrote, and wrote, and wrote!' **Laurence Vittes**

Valentini

'Oddities & Trifles – The Very Peculiar Instrumental Music of Giovanni Valentini' Canzonas

ACRONYM with **Beth Wenstrom** *vr*
New Focus © FCR904 (68' • DDD)



Early music ensemble ACRONYM's third recording is devoted entirely to 17 canzonas

by the now obscure Giovanni Valentini (c1582-1649), who rose from obscurity himself to become Hofkapellmeister of the Holy Roman Empire and play a part in the diversification of vocal music into purely instrumental roles. The title, 'Oddities & Trifles', a bow to the composer's slight rhythmic and metric eccentricities, headlines quite a pleasant CD.

Valentini's *Canzoni, libro primo*, printed in 1609 when Valentini was working in and



Jason Vieaux and Yolanda Kondonassis: 'Together' in lesser-known American repertoire

around the Polish court in Warsaw, showcases the quality that helped develop his reputation, leading him first to Graz and then to Vienna. Played with expertise, enthusiasm and an almost tactile sense of timbre by different configurations of ACRONYM's 12-member band, occasionally made more sumptuous by a theorbo/guitarist and harpsichord/organist, highlights include a 10-minute-long violin sonata of mellifluous beauty, a delightful organ solo and a concluding, harmonically haunting Sonata a 4 in G minor which may, viola da gambist Kivie Cahn-Lipman in his booklet-notes suggests, 'be possibly be the first notated *ppp* in music history'.

The sound, recorded at a historic 18th-century meeting house in rural New Hampshire, is intimate and quiet, and yet occasionally almost startling in its clarity and realism. Defining its interest in forgotten composers such as Valentini, ACRONYM stands for 'Altmusik Camerata Resurrecting Old – but New to You – Music'. Although Valentini might not have appreciated the name, he would certainly have fallen in love with the playing. **Laurence Vittes**

'Together'

K Fitch *Knock on Wood* **Hovhaness** *Sonata*,
'Spirit of Trees' **Montsalvatge** *Fantasia*
Pujol *Suite mágica* **Schocker** *Hypnotized*
Yolanda Kondonassis *hp* **Jason Vieaux** *gtr*
Azica © ACD71297 (70' • DDD)



Most of the music on this disc is likely to be unfamiliar to the general listener,

but not for much longer if harpist Yolanda Kondonassis and guitarist Jason Vieaux have their way. And why shouldn't they? Each is a splendid artist who has carved out a solo career on her/his respective instrument. Bringing them 'Together', as this disc is called, was a very bright idea.

It's smart partly because the repertoire and the performances dispel myths about what these instruments can offer. The harp isn't all heaven and the guitar isn't all earth and passion, as portrayed by composers who apply myriad colours and expressive threads using strumming, plucking and percussive techniques.

But no matter. Máximo Diego Pujol's *Suite mágica* delivers on the promise of its title with four Argentine-tinged movements of ardent allure. The three movements of Xavier Montsalvatge's *Fantasia* sing and dance in spicy and delicate Spanish flavours. For something blending the ethereal with exotic and natural worlds, there's Alan Hovhaness's Sonata for harp and guitar *Spirit of Trees*.

All of those pieces were written within the last three decades or so, and Kondonassis and Vieaux have set out to add to the canon for their special pairing. Two works they commissioned here receive first recordings: Gary Schocker's sweet and haunting *Hypnotized*, with a songful fourth movement entitled 'Together', and Keith Fitch's many-layered *Knock on Wood*, which indeed finds the musicians tapping on the bodies of their instruments when they aren't conversing with an almost rapturous sense of cohesion.

Donald Rosenberg

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Gidon Kremer / Kremerata Baltica NEW SEASONS

Gidon Kremer returns to the Yellow label after more than a decade with a brand new recording of Philip Glass' Second Violin Concerto - "The American Seasons". The album also includes works of Arvo Pärt, György Ligeti & well-known Japanese film composer Shigeru Umebayashi.

CD 00947344179



Wolfgang Rihm ET LUX

Hungas Ensemble, Minquet Quartet / Paul Van Nevel, conductor

"This hour-long requiem for eight singers (the Hungas Ensemble) and four string players (the Minquet Quartet) is unlike any requiem you'll hear... The instrumental writing is astonishingly intricate, yet it's the sum effect of the whole piece - sailing the terror and uncertainty of faith - that both unsettles and thrills."

- The Times (UK)

CD 00947344179



Pete Townshend CLASSIC QUADROPHENIA

A British guitar legend, co-founder of seminal rock band The Who, creator of the "Rock Opera" and one of the greatest among composers of the 20th century, PETE TOWNSEND introduces CLASSIC QUADROPHENIA, an orchestral presentation of The Who's 1973 masterwork. The recording features Pete along with British tenor Alfie Boe, the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra & Oriana Choir, conducted by Robert Ziegler and orchestrated by Rachel Fuller. Available on CD, limited-edition double vinyl and CD/DVD Deluxe edition. CD 00947344179

Mahan Esfahani TIME PRESENT AND TIME PAST

"Daring and fiery" (The Times), harpsichordist Mahan Esfahani releases his debut album on ARCHIV PRODUKTION, together with Concerto Kilo. Fusing Baroque with Minimalism, this eclectic program includes works ranging from Bach (JS & CPE), Scarlatti and Geminiani to Gorecki and Reich.

CD 00947344179



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THE SCENE

Summer festivals abound, celebrating Cuba in Minnesota, new music in Massachusetts, Schubert at Menlo and intriguing repertoire in New York – plus, there's Whitacre in LA and Corigliano in Virginia

LENOX, MA

Tanglewood

Opening Night at Tanglewood (July 3);

Festival of Contemporary Music (July 23)

The Tanglewood 2015 season opens on the eve of Independence Day with an all-American programme: John Harbison's *Remembering Gatsby* (a 'Foxtrot for Orchestra'), which evokes scenes from F Scott Fitzgerald's novel; Gershwin's Piano Concerto in F, with Kirill Gerstein; Copland's *Lincoln Portrait*, with narrator Jessye Norman reading from Abraham Lincoln's speeches and letters; and *Harlem*, Duke Ellington's New York-inspired symphonic work. Later in the month, more contemporary but less-familiar fare is on offer as the Festival of Contemporary Music gets under way, including a concert featuring conductor Oliver Knussen, pianist Peter Serkin and tenor Nicholas Phan. bso.org

MINNEAPOLIS, MN

Minnesota Orchestra

Sommerfest (July 5 - August 1)

This year's festival is a celebration of Cuba. The 23-voice Cuban Coro Entrevoces joins the orchestra for an evening of American and Cuban music. Cuban pianist Nachito Herrera tackles Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue*; Alessio Bax makes his Minnesota Orchestra debut with Rachmaninov's *Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini* and Falla's *Nights in the Gardens of Spain*. Other highlights are a Viennese-themed concert (Strauss: The Waltz King), a screening of *Singin' in the Rain* with a live soundtrack, and a concert performance of Puccini's *Madama Butterfly* starring Kelly Kaduce. minnesotaorchestra.org

VIENNA, VA

Wolf Trap Opera

John Corigliano: The Ghosts of Versailles (July 10, 12, 15 & 18)

Corigliano considers this work a 'grand opera buffa' because it mixes grand opera with the high-jinks fun of a Beaumarchais comedy. Since its premiere in 1991 at the Met Opera in New York, the opera has undergone revision for chamber orchestra to make it more palatable and affordable for smaller companies. The plot concerns the ghost of Marie Antoinette (Melinda Whittington), who seeks the help of her favourite playwright, Beaumarchais (Will Liverman), and his characters to reverse the

EVENT OF THE MONTH



David Finckel and Wu Han:
Music@Menlo founders

ATHERTON, CA

Music@Menlo

Thirteenth season: Schubert (July 17 - August 8)

Music@Menlo celebrates its 13th season with a deep dive into the chamber music of Schubert. This thoughtful festival – conceived by the musical couple pianist Wu Han and

cellist David Finckel – offers seven main concert programmes with world-class chamber musicians (including Inon Barnatan, Juho Pohjonen, Gloria Chien and Benjamin Beilman, as well as the Escher Quartet). The concerts explore different aspects of Schubert's musical career, from his early adoration of Mozart and Beethoven, to his later

sublime masterworks, with highlights from the Schubert song-cycles. In addition, five Schubertiades – traditionally social gatherings in private homes – delve further into the great man's music, mixing piano sonatas, songs and other chamber works. musicatmenlo.org

tragic course of events that led to her death. An opera within an opera – a real musical treat. wolftrap.org

NORTH ADAMS, MA

Bang on a Can

Summer Festival (July 13 - August 2)

This festival set in the beautiful Berkshire Mountains of Western Massachusetts is considered a musical utopia for performers and listeners alike. Dedicated to adventurous contemporary music with daily performances ranging from informal gatherings to more structured recitals, it's a showcase for many premieres. Performers and composers talk about their work, and there's much interaction between audience and musicians. The final week kicks off with Michael Gordon's 1991 opera *Van Gogh*, based on a letter from the artist to his brother Theo. The whole event ends with a six-hour-long 'summer marathon'. bangonacan.org

NEW YORK, NY

Lincoln Center Festival

Cleveland Orchestra (July 15-18)

Among the many offerings of the festival (which begins July 6), four performances by the Cleveland Orchestra, led by its

Music Director Franz Welser-Möst, offer some intriguing repertoire. The first and last concerts present Richard Strauss's one-act opera *Daphne* with soloists to include Regine Hangler, Nancy Maultsby, Andreas Schager and Ain Anger. The second concert, in an interesting pairing, presents Dvořák's Symphony No 5 with Messiaen's experimental *Chronochromie*. lincolncenterfestival.org

LOS ANGELES, CA

Los Angeles Philharmonic

Carmina Burana with Dudamel (July 21 & 23)

A dramatic way to celebrate the great outdoors at the Hollywood Bowl: listening to the bombast and drama of Orff's *Carmina Burana*, led by Gustavo Dudamel with the Los Angeles Philharmonic, the Los Angeles Master Chorale and the Los Angeles Children's Chorus. Soloists are to include Joëlle Harvey, Lawrence Brownlee and Brian Mulligan. Also on the programme are two beautiful works by the celebrated American choral composer Eric Whitacre: *Her Sacred Spirit Soars* and *Equus*. hollywoodbowl.com

Previews by Damian Fowler

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The art of listening must not be allowed to fade

Last month I gave a talk to the Federation of Recorded Music Societies, the body which supports more than 200 groups throughout the UK dedicated to listening to and discussing recordings. My given topic was 'trends in the recording industry', and it was just one part of a weekend of presentations and performances. Here was a gathering in which the art of active listening was alive and well. Which of course isn't a new concept to *Gramophone's* readers: it's clear from so much of the correspondence we receive about topics from performances to audio equipment, that listening is something you take very seriously indeed.

But how many people in wider society do likewise? We're bombarded at almost all moments by countless competing demands on our attention, and what we see and hear, whether three-minute pop songs or the rapid frame cutting of much film and television, so often seems built on, and thus reinforces, the notion that we have increasingly short attention spans.

The art of sitting, concentrating and listening to something long-form and complex is an increasingly alien experience. And unless people develop that skill, classical music will face an uphill struggle.

There are many inspiring organisations and initiatives arguing for greater opportunities for children to play instruments. From the committed campaigning of Julian Lloyd Webber, to the BBC's colourful Ten Pieces project, the emphasis is usually on how performing can change lives. The BBC describes Ten Pieces as aiming to 'inspire [children] to develop their own creative responses to the pieces through



music, dance or digital art'. All of which is wonderful – but what might prove just as enriching is if it also teaches them to listen. As one of the ambassadors for Ten Pieces, harpist Catrin Finch, put it last year in an interview: 'We forget how to sit down and listen to something. What's important is that children learn to appreciate music and enjoy music.'

Listening and playing are linked of course. The greatest musicians are necessarily brilliant listeners, and even at more modest levels, playing an instrument – to whatever standard – is an excellent way of appreciating the complexity and challenges of music.

My two-year-old daughter attends Colourstrings, a teaching method in which singing leads on to playing. But equally crucial is a focus on listening. Parents can buy recordings on which the simple songs their toddlers learn are followed by orchestral pieces which draw on and develop those melodies, the goal being 'that of educating children to become active in their listening to music of value'. Which, as Editor of *Gramophone*, was indeed music to my ears.

When I visited Julian Bream prior to his receiving *Gramophone's* Lifetime Achievement Award in 2013, he explained how he'd 'changed from a player into a listener' since retirement. 'I listen in a more acute way now,' he said. 'I think quite a lot about music, particularly now I don't play anything – my mind is always cogitating.' We should all take inspiration from Bream's belief in the active and enriching experience of listening – and recognise the importance of nurturing it in others.

martin.cullingford@markallengroup.com

THIS MONTH'S CONTRIBUTORS



Collection articles are always a labour of love, and **PETER QUANTRILL** found that he was no less intrigued

and entertained by every bar of Haydn's *Drumroll* Symphony now that he has listened to 60-plus versions of it. 'Why can't we hear it in concert more often?', he wonders, 'and what do those folksongs mean?'



'Iván Fischer brought a refreshing simplicity to his analysis of Mahler's Ninth,' recalls writer

REBECCA SCHMID, who has written our Musician and the Score feature this issue. 'He explained that the music in this symphony can be understood as a mercurial flow of motives, emotions and images.'



'Whole books have been written about *Tristan und Isolde* and its influence,' says **HUGO SHIRLEY**, who celebrates

Wagner's opera in this month's cover feature. 'But it is nevertheless fascinating to try and put into words what this intoxicating work means to us today, 150 years after its premiere; that famous chord is, in all senses, just the beginning.'

Gramophone, which has been serving the classical music world since 1923, is first and foremost a monthly review magazine, delivered today in both print and digital formats. It boasts an eminent and knowledgeable panel of experts, which reviews the full range of classical music recordings. Its reviews are completely independent. In addition to reviews, its interviews and features help readers to explore in greater depth the recordings that the magazine covers, as well as offer insight into the work of composers and performers. It is the magazine for the classical record collector, as well as for the enthusiast starting a voyage of discovery.

THE REVIEWERS Andrew Achenbach • Nalen Anthoni • Mike Ashman • Philip Clark • Alexandra Coghlan • Rob Cowan (consultant reviewer) • Jeremy Dibble • Peter Dickinson • Jed Distler • Duncan Druce • Adrian Edwards • Richard Fairman • David Fallows • David Fanning • Iain Fenlon • Fabrice Fitch • Jonathan Freeman-Attwood • Caroline Gill • Edward Greenfield • David Gutman • Lindsay Kemp • Philip Kennicott • Tess Knighton • Richard Lawrence • Ivan March • Andrew Mellor • Ivan Moody • Bryce Morrison • Jeremy Nicholas • Christopher Nickol • Geoffrey Norris • Richard Osborne • Stephen Plaistow • Peter Quantrill • Guy Rickards • Malcolm Riley • Marc Rochester • Julie Anne Sadie • Edward Seckerson • Pwyll ap Siôn • Harriet Smith • Ken Smith • David Patrick Stearns • David Threasher • David Vickers • John Warrack • Richard Whitehouse • Arnold Whittall • Richard Wigmore • William Yeoman

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EDITORIAL

Phone 020 7738 5454 **Fax** 020 7733 2325
email gramophone@markallengroup.com
EDITOR AND PUBLISHER Martin Cullingford
DEPUTY EDITOR Sarah Kirkup / 020 7501 6365
REVIEWS EDITOR Hugo Shirley / 020 7501 6367
ONLINE AND FEATURES EDITOR

James McCarthy / 020 7501 6366
SUB-EDITOR David Thresher / 020 7501 6370
ART DIRECTOR Dinah Lone / 020 7501 6689
PICTURE EDITOR Sunita Sharma-Gibson / 020 7501 6369

AUDIO EDITOR Andrew Everard
EDITORIAL ADMINISTRATOR Libby McPhee
LIBRARIAN Richard Farr
THANKS TO Hannah Nepil, Marija Đurić Spare and Andrew Mellor
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF James Jolly

ADVERTISING

Phone 020 7738 5454 **Fax** 020 7733 2325
email gramophone.ads@markallengroup.com

SALES MANAGER

Esther Zuke / 020 7501 6368
SENIOR SALES EXECUTIVE
Luke Battersby / 020 7501 6373

SUBSCRIPTIONS AND BACK ISSUES

0900 137201 (UK) +44 (0)1722 716997 (overseas)
subscriptions@markallengroup.com

PUBLISHING

Phone 020 7738 5454
HEAD OF MARKETING AND DIGITAL STRATEGY Luca Da Re / 020 7501 6362
MARKETING EXECUTIVE Julian Halse / 020 7501 6372

DIRECTOR, INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT Matthew Cianfarani
DATA AND DIGITAL DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR Tom Pollard
PRODUCTION DIRECTOR Richard Hamshire / 01722 716997

PRODUCTION MANAGER Jon Redmayne
CIRCULATION DIRECTOR Sally Boettcher / 01722 716997
SUBSCRIPTIONS MANAGER Chris Hoskins / 01722 716997

PUBLISHING DIRECTOR Stian Harrington
MANAGING DIRECTOR Jon Benson
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER Ben Allen
CHAIRMAN Mark Allen

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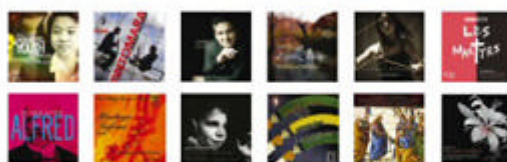
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The 12 most highly recommended recordings of the month

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London Symphony Orchestra
LSO Live

Sir John Eliot Gardiner and the
London Symphony Orchestra
continue their much-praised
Mendelssohn exploration

SACD + 1Blu-ray audio LSO0775



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Mendelssohn

Symphony No 5 'Reformation'

Overture: Ruy Blas

Overture: Calm Sea & Prosperous Voyage

Sir John Eliot Gardiner

London Symphony Orchestra

***** 'This was no imitation period band, but a modern orchestra responding brilliantly and unapologetically...' *The Guardian*

***** 'Felix Mendelssohn, the cosseted wunderkind... was remade as a Gothic hero in John Eliot Gardiner's exhilarating performance.' *The Times*

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NEW MUSIC FROM SCOTLAND
ON GRAMOPHONE'S
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DELPHIAN



DCD34153

**Luminate: Live Music Now Scotland
celebrates 30 years**

Spencer-Strachan Duo, Astrid Quartet,
Laura Margaret Smith, Emma Versteeg *et al*

This year, Live Music Now Scotland – an organisation that promotes the work of stellar young artists – celebrates its 30th birthday. A blazing trail of commissions has followed in the charity's wake. In recognition of these three decades' achievements, Delphian has taken a snapshot of LMN's activity, itself a miniature picture of the wider cultural endeavours taking place in Scotland: some of Scotland's shining young artists appear in world premiere recordings of works by Eddie McGuire, Alasdair Nicolson, William Sweeney, John Maxwell Geddes, and of a partly improvised suite by folk/classical trio Wildings.

**'Sheer quality rings
through this CD'**

— The Herald, April 2015



DCD34155

John McLeod: Moments in Time
Red Note Ensemble

Aberdeen-born McLeod's increasingly acclaimed music bears all the hallmarks of exuberant colour and precisely imagined fantasy that his early associations with Lennox Berkeley and Witold Lutosławski would lead one to expect. Recorded during the composer's eightieth birthday year, this landmark collection brings together McLeod's four mythological 'songs' – powerful dramatic scenes in which instruments are elevated to voice-like expression – and a further work which crystallises the theme of a single moment with a long expressive 'shadow'. The extraordinary chamber musicians gathered here, including long-time Delphian artists Simon Smith (piano) and Robert Irvine (cello), display unequalled virtuosity and passion on a disc which is sure to confirm Red Note as among the UK's premier contemporary music ensembles.

New in May 2015



DCD34157

Eddie McGuire: Entangled Fortunes
Red Note Ensemble

Eddie McGuire is one of Scotland's greatest living composers. A renaissance man, his compositional voice is informed by a broad wealth of cultural experience and by an unlimited melodic creativity. In this intensely beautiful and unpretentious music, folk-like tunes appear naturally, taking their place in a world of invention large enough to contain minimalist gestures, intense romanticism, meditative silence and sudden drama. In the second of two discs programmed to initiate their new recording partnership with Delphian, Red Note Ensemble bring passion and care to this music – a token of the regard in which McGuire is held by Scottish musicians of all generations.

New in June 2015

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Wallyford, EAST LOTHIAN, EH21 8BZ
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Lugano (Switzerland)

Orchestra della Svizzera italiana

Markus Poschner

Principal conductor

Rereading Brahms

The Complete Symphonies of Brahms

www.osi-brahms.ch

Teatro LAC - Lugano Arte e Cultura

October 2015 – May 2016

“Brahms’s symphonic repertoire seems almost to have been conceived for this orchestra. The project will enable us to explore aspects of his music that are already present in his chamber writing but have all too often been overlooked in the symphonies.”

Markus Poschner

OSI - Resident orchestra at the new Teatro LAC

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OSI

GRAMOPHONE *Editor's choice*

Martin Cullingford's pick of the finest recordings from this month's reviews



RECORDING OF THE MONTH



SCHUBERT

Piano Sonatas Nos 18 & 21. Allegretto, D915. Impromptus, D935. Hungarian Melody, D817. Moments musicaux, D780
Sir András Schiff *pf*
ECM New Series
Ⓜ Ⓜ 481 1572

► **STEPHEN PLAISTOW'S REVIEW IS ON PAGE 22**

Schiff's instrument of choice here – a fortepiano of c1820, and one rich in different tones, well captured by ECM – lends a remarkably detailed transparency and intimacy to his fascinating interpretation of these Schubert works.



MAHLER

Symphony No 9
Budapest Festival Orchestra / Iván Fischer
Channel Classics
Ⓜ Ⓜ CCSSA36115

Fischer's Budapest Mahler series has continued to engage and intrigue our critics but this carefully textured, powerful Ninth is impressive indeed.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 31**



MARTINŮ Viola Works
Maxim Rysanov *va* **Katya Apekisheva** *pf* **BBC Symphony Orchestra / Jiří Bělohlávek**
BIS Ⓜ Ⓜ BIS2030

Martinů relished the tonal possibilities of the viola, which seems perfectly suited to the Bohemian spirit of much of this music. Rysanov is on superb form.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 32**



LAWES

The Royal Consort
Phantasm
Linn Ⓜ Ⓜ Ⓜ CKD470
Gramophone Award-winners, category

finalists on many other occasions, Phantasm continue to excel. This *Royal Consort*, the first complete performance of the original versions, confirms that status.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 48**



'TINTOMARA'

Wim Van Hasselt *tpt*
Jörgen van Rijen *tbn*
Channel Classics
Ⓜ Ⓜ CCSSA36315
And now for

something completely different: what links this recital of Purcell, Rabe and Ravel works for trumpet and trombone? Simply the joyful playing. An unexpected delight.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 61**



JS BACH

Cello Suites
David Watkin *vc*
Resonus Ⓜ Ⓜ RES10147
Familiar works these may be, but truly exploratory,

technically refined and strongly personal performances – as here – can help us hear them anew. A triumph for David Watkin and the Resonus label.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 64**



HANDEL L'Allegro, il Penseroso ed il Moderato
Gabrieli Consort and Players / Paul McCreesh
Signum Ⓜ Ⓜ SIGCD392
Another re-creation

of an original: this time Handel's setting of Milton's words, a remarkable variety of music well capturing the images and scenes of the text, all expertly performed.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 79**



'ENGLISH HYMN ANTHEMS'

Alison Balsom *tpt*
Choir of King's College, Cambridge / Stephen Cleobury

King's College Ⓜ Ⓜ KGS0004

I attended these sessions and the glorious union of music-making and atmosphere I witnessed has been captured wonderfully.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 84**



'L'HEURE EXQUISE'

Alice Coote *mez*
Graham Johnson *pf*
Hyperion Ⓜ CDA67962
An exquisite time indeed in the

company of Alice Coote and Graham Johnson, clearly relishing every minute of this delightfully formed and performed French song recital.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 87**



DONIZETTI Les martyrs
Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment / Sir Mark Elder
Opera Rara Ⓜ Ⓜ ORC52
Sir Mark Elder's

belief in this music shines through in a wonderful performance of a work whose complex history kept from it the reputation it might now achieve.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 90**



DVD/BLU-RAY

VERDI Les vêpres siciliennes
Royal Opera House / Sir Antonio Pappano
Warner Classics Ⓜ DVD 2564 61643-4;
Ⓜ 2564 61643-1

A lesser-known Verdi opera given the star treatment: 'hugely recommended', concludes our critic.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 95**



REISSUE/ARCHIVE 'CD PREMIERES - RECORDED 1940-46'

Leopold Stokowski
Music & Arts Ⓜ Ⓜ CD1287

A major addition to our understanding of Stokowski's recordings from Music & Arts.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 96**



Listen to many of the Editor's Choice recordings online at **qobuz.com**

FOR THE RECORD



Forging ahead: the partnership of Nelsons and the Boston SO is to be preserved on disc

Boston Symphony Orchestra and Andris Nelsons sign deal with DG

The Boston Symphony Orchestra and Andris Nelsons, its Music Director, have announced a recording partnership with the Deutsche Grammophon label. Future plans include live recordings of Shostakovich's Symphonies Nos 5-10 plus incidental music from *King Lear*, *Hamlet* and *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk*.

The first album, 'Shostakovich under Stalin's Shadow' – featuring Symphony No 10 and the Passacaglia from *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk* – is to be released in the summer of 2015. The second instalment of the series – a double album including Symphonies Nos 5, 8 and 9, plus incidental music from *Hamlet* – is scheduled for release in May 2016. The third recording, due out in the summer of 2017, will be another double album of Symphonies Nos 6 and 7, plus music from *King Lear*.

Of the new partnership with DG, Nelsons said: 'I am completely thrilled and honoured to be leading this very

exciting collaboration with the Boston Symphony Orchestra and Deutsche Grammophon. It is an immense privilege to focus on the music of Shostakovich, whose extraordinary work transcends even the circumstances in which it was written, and is timeless on many levels. At the same time, with my formative years spent in Soviet Latvia, the music of Shostakovich in particular speaks to me personally in a distinctive way and I'm sure that special affinity will be communicated in these recordings.'

Nelsons recorded Shostakovich's Eighth Symphony with the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra at the Lucerne Festival in 2011 (released on DVD and Blu-ray by C Major; reviewed 9/12). He and the Boston Symphony will perform Shostakovich's Symphony No 10 at the Proms on August 23, while their first recording together – on the orchestra's own label – of music by Wagner and Sibelius is reviewed this issue, on page 37.

Kronos Quartet's anniversary disc wins Songlines Music Award 2015

Gramophone's sister title, world music magazine *Songlines*, has named the Kronos Quartet as winners of its Cross-Cultural Collaboration Award for 'A Thousand Thoughts'. The Nonesuch album was released to mark the ever-exploratory string quartet's 40th anniversary.

Royal College of Music announces £25m redevelopment plan

London's Royal College of Music is seeking planning permission to invest £25 million into redeveloping its building on the Prince Consort Road, opposite the Royal Albert Hall. It has engaged architect John Simpson in reimagining the college, focusing primarily on the creation of two new performance spaces, the building of additional practice rooms, a permanent home for the RCM's Museum of Music, and additional recording and broadcasting facilities.

Philip Glass wins \$100,000 Glenn Gould Prize

The American composer Philip Glass has won this year's Glenn Gould Prize, worth \$100,000. The prize is awarded to 'an individual for a unique lifetime contribution that has enriched the human condition through the arts'. Previous winners include Leonard Cohen (2011), Pierre Boulez (2002) and Oscar Peterson (1993).

University of St Andrews launches new record label, Sanctiandree

The University of St Andrews has launched a new record label, Sanctiandree, to profile St Salvator's Chapel Choir and its Music Director Tom Wilkinson. The initial aim of the

Marin Alsop commits to São Paulo for another four years

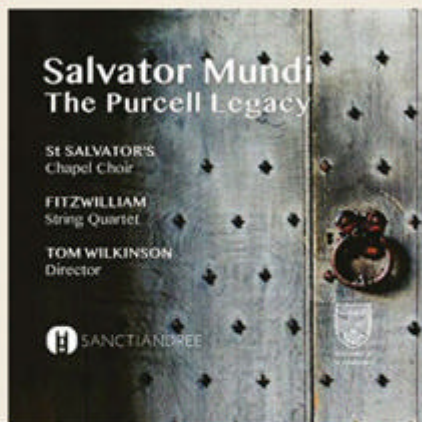
Marin Alsop will remain Music Director of the São Paulo Symphony Orchestra until the end of December 2019, extending a formal relationship with the orchestra which began in 2012.

Under the new contract, Alsop's time with the orchestra will increase to 12 weeks per season, and she and the orchestra will tour internationally.

Alsop is currently recording the Prokofiev symphonies with the orchestra for Naxos, and there are plans to complete the symphony cycles of Brahms and Mahler.

In the official announcement, Alsop said: 'My work with the São Paulo Symphony Orchestra is extremely gratifying and together we've not only raised the standards

of performances but also taken the orchestra out to the people of the São Paulo region and internationally. This city is one of the most vibrant and exciting places on the planet right now and it's thrilling to see the orchestra take its rightful place at the heart of this great metropolis. I eagerly look forward to seeing where this journey will take us!'



The first release from the new Sanctiandree label

label is to issue a new recording every six months; the first, released in April, is entitled 'Salvator Mundi: The Purcell Legacy' and features the music of Purcell, Blow, Clark and Jackson of Exeter.

Julia Wolfe wins 2015 Pulitzer Prize for Music

Julia Wolfe's *Anthracite Fields* – an oratorio about coal mining in Pennsylvania around the turn of the 20th century – has won the 2015 Pulitzer Prize for Music, worth \$10,000.

Arabella Steinbacher stars in EFG Gramophone Conversation

Violinist Arabella Steinbacher, whose Pentatone recordings of the violin concertos of Mozart, Bartók, Dvořák and Szymanowski have previously secured Editor's Choice accolades, joins us for an EFG *Gramophone* Conversation at Foyles on June 22. She will be talking to Editor-in-Chief James Jolly and playing live to launch her new recording of the Tchaikovsky and Mendelssohn Violin Concertos. For information, visit foyles.co.uk/events



Jonas Kaufmann to sing 'Rule, Britannia!' at the Last Night of the Proms

The 2015 BBC Proms season has been unveiled: 92 concerts of classical music (from Friday July 17 to Saturday September 12), all of which will be broadcast live on BBC Radio 3.

The Last Night will be conducted once again by Marin Alsop, who first led the celebrations in 2013. She will be joined by renowned tenor Jonas Kaufmann (who will sing 'Rule, Britannia!'), soprano Danielle de Niese and pianist Benjamin Grosvenor.

A particular focus of this year's Proms is the piano. A total of 25 solo pianists will make an appearance, including Maria João Pires (playing Mozart's Piano Concerto No 23 with the Chamber Orchestra of Europe under Bernard Haitink on August 28) and Elisabeth Leonskaja (performing Mozart's Piano Concerto No 22 with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra under Charles Dutoit on August 19). In addition, Leif Ove Andsnes will be performing Beethoven's *Choral Fantasy* with the Mahler Chamber Orchestra, alongside all five of the composer's piano concertos. *Gramophone* readers will be familiar with Andsnes's excellent 'Beethoven Journey' series: the first (featuring the First and Third Concertos) was a Recording of the Month and both subsequent volumes were Editor's Choices.

Another highlight for pianophiles is the concert on July 28 when Prokofiev's five concertos will be performed in one concert by Daniil Trifonov, Sergei Babayan and Alexei Volodin, with the LSO under Valery Gergiev.

On September 11, Sir Simon Rattle will appear not with the LSO or the Berlin Philharmonic but with the Vienna Philharmonic in Elgar's *The Dream of Gerontius* with soloists Magdalena Kožená, Toby Spence and Roderick Williams.

In all, 21 world premieres will be performed, including James MacMillan's Symphony No 4 (on August 3), organ concerto *Pan* by B Tommy Andersson (on September 3), *Epithalamium* by Hugh Wood (July 22) and *Arise, Athena!* by Eleanor Alberga, which will serve as a curtain-raiser at the Last Night.

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PODCASTS

Pianist Valentina Lisitsa (pictured) speaks to *Gramophone's* Editor Martin Cullingford about the technical and emotional demands of recording Alexander Scriabin's piano music 100 years after the composer's death. And Dame Emma Kirkby, for many the voice of early music, joins James Jolly to reminisce about her outstanding career and some of the collaborations she has enjoyed along the way.



GERGIEV ON SHOSTAKOVICH

Watch Valery Gergiev introduce each of Shostakovich's 15 symphonies (courtesy of Arthaus Musik) exclusively on our website and Youtube channel for fascinating insights from a conductor who has spent a lifetime immersed in these works.

BBC NOW'S COMPOSER HERO

Andrew Mellor speaks to the BBC National Orchestra of Wales's Composer-in-Association B Tommy Andersson about how he and the orchestra are seeking to redefine the composer/orchestra relationship and bring new music to larger audiences.

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THE OPERA THAT CHANGED MUSIC

Hugo Shirley reflects on
the lasting influence of
Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde*,
150 years after its premiere



Nina Stemme and Robert Gambill in Nikolaus Lehnhoff's Glyndebourne production in 2008

n the eve of the 20th century, Alma Mahler wrote in her diary that 'only one opera exists in the whole world: my *Tristan*'. A quarter of a century earlier, Clara Schumann had described Wagner's opera, premiered 150 years ago this June, as 'the most disgusting thing I have ever seen or heard in my life'. She wrote further: 'To be forced to see and hear such crazy lovemaking the whole evening, in which every feeling of decency is violated and by which not only the public but even musicians seem to be enchanted – that is the saddest thing I have ever experienced in my artistic life...During the second act the two of them sleep and sing; through the whole last act – for fully 40 minutes – Tristan dies. And that they call dramatic!!!' Brahms, meanwhile, claimed that looking at the score put him in a bad mood for the rest of the day. Elgar, however, when he first heard the *Liebestod* in 1883, wrote in his concert programme: 'I shall never forget this'; when he received a vocal score of the work for his 36th birthday he was fully effusive: 'This Book contains the Height,' he wrote inside, 'the Depth, – the Breadth, – the Sweetness, – the Sorrow, – the Best and the whole for the Best of This world and the Next.'

After attending a performance at Covent Garden in 1933, Benjamin Britten reported in his diary: 'Dwarfs every other creation save perhaps [Beethoven's] Ninth. The glorious shape of the whole, the perfect orchestration: sublime idea of it and the gigantic realisation of the idea. He is master of us all.' Grieg, a lifelong admirer of Wagner, if not an uncritical one, couldn't contain his mirth when his friend Björnstjēne Björnson, by contrast, described the opera in a letter to him as 'the most enormous depravity I have ever seen or heard, but in its own crazy way it is so overwhelming that one is deadened by it as by a drug'. Björnson continued rather less delicately: 'Even more immoral...than the plot is this seasick music that destroys all sense of structure in its quest for tonal colour. In the end, one just becomes a glob of slime on an ocean shore, something ejaculated by that masturbating pig in an opiate frenzy!'

Just these few choice quotations suggest that no opera, or even musical work – at least before the 20th century – has inspired such visceral and varied reactions as the 'sublimely morbid, consuming and magical work' that, according to Thomas Mann, was *Tristan und Isolde*. Friedrich Nietzsche famously called it the 'true *opus metaphysicum* of all art', writing elsewhere that 'I am still looking for a work with as dangerous a fascination, with as terrible and sweet an infinity as *Tristan* – I look through the arts in vain'. On first seeing a score of the Prelude, the philosopher – in what might serve as a warning for anyone setting out to write about the work – reported: 'I simply cannot bring myself to remain critically aloof from this music; every nerve in me is a-twitch, and it has been a long time since I had such a lasting sense of ecstasy.'

BREAKING THE RULES

The past 150 years are littered with writers trying to express the fascination, revulsion, or both that *Tristan* inspires; for a further six years before that, we have people trying to fathom the piece either from just the score, published in 1859, or from hearing the Prelude, first performed in Prague that same year and in Paris in early 1860. Wagner sent Berlioz a copy, but even he



The first Tristan and Isolde, 1865: Ludwig and Malvina Schnorr von Carolsfeld

was left scratching his head by the 'strange' first page: 'I have yet to discover the least idea of what the author wishes to do,' he wrote. Even today, *Tristan* remains a work that can inspire fierce devotion or baffled resistance: it eludes clear definition and explanation and encourages intemperate hyperbole at every turn. Maybe Michael Tanner's thought-provoking description is one of the best: 'Along with Bach's *St Matthew Passion*,' he writes, 'it is one of the two greatest religious works of our culture.'

Or perhaps we can turn to more coolly objective matters, and *The New Kobbé's Opera Book*, which states that '*Tristan* is the most influential opera in all musical history'. If Isolde herself is allowed in the opera to zero in on the 'und', the *wörtlein* (or 'little word') that both unites her and Tristan and places unwanted distance between them, then might we also read significance into the fact that *Kobbé* talks not of 'operatic' history but of 'musical' history? The standard assessment of the opera's role in this latter regard is well known: it broke down the rules of harmony, emancipated dissonance, unleashed atonality and set the foundations, four decades early, for the musical 20th century. If we are to believe for a moment that, *pace* Robert Craft, Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring* was the 'prize bull that inseminated the whole modern movement', then perhaps we can suggest that *Tristan* provided the potent cocktail that helped get the bull in the mood. The two works could hardly inhabit more different aesthetic universes, but if analysts have tussled for decades to define *The Rite's* 'Augurs of Spring' chord (before someone suggested that Stravinsky's hands had simply alighted by chance on a chord that sounded right at the piano), then that is nothing compared with the fascination with the '*Tristan* chord' – heard almost immediately in the Prelude after the cellos' first three yearning, ambiguous notes.

The four notes of the chord have been the subject of endless musicological wrangling, which has attempted to define its significance in the opera itself, as well as how it has gone on to have a life of its own, as signifier of heightened and frustrated desire and tension not only in Wagner's later operas but in all manner of *fin de siècle* works, good and bad. The *New Grove* dictionary does its best at a summary: 'It can be explained in ordinary functional harmony as an augmented (French) sixth with the G sharp as a long appoggiatura to the A, or...as an added sixth chord in first inversion with chromatic alterations.' If ever an opera seemed resistant to such analysis, though, it is *Tristan*, whose world is patently not one of 'ordinary functional harmony', as is made clear even in those first three bars of the Prelude, whose *Langsam und schmachtend* ('Slow and yearning') marking is as much a precis of the action as a musical direction.

The key signature, ostensibly A minor, gives little away; the 6/8 pulse is all but undetectable. The instrumentation of the chord sets the tone for the score's entire orchestration: low, mellow wind instruments blend with the cellos to form a new sonority whose exact make-up is difficult to pick out. Throughout the score Wagner exploits this blending of instruments: a technique, pioneered in the organ-like chords of *Lohengrin* and which later achieved physical realisation in the sunken pit of Bayreuth (Theodor Adorno criticised it in Marxist terms as part of a concern with the phantasmagorical which sought dishonestly to conceal the means of production). But the chord, and the way the following phrase peters out, set the work's pattern for creating musical expectations that are never resolved, showing why, for Robert P Morgan, *Tristan* exemplified the most important tendency in 19th-century tonality,



Wagner and Cosima's illegitimate daughter Isolde was born just before the premiere

by which 'key centres came to be defined more by implication than by actual statement.'

But it's more still than that: harmony becomes psychology, the whole score a glorious extended metaphor for unfulfilled desire, and for the philosophical impossibility of fulfilling desire more generally. So complete is Wagner's achievement in upsetting our harmonic perspective that the C major chords that brassily intrude at the end of Act 1 sound disturbing and disorientating. And when we finally reach resolution at the close of the opera over 5000 bars and four hours of music later, with what Richard Strauss described as the 'the most beautifully

orchestrated B major chord in the history of music', the final effect can and should be totally overwhelming.

DIFFICULT BEGINNINGS

Strauss was a day shy of his first birthday when his father, Franz, played the horn at the premiere of *Tristan und Isolde*, at the Munich Court Theatre on June 10, 1865.

The staging of the opera, six years after its completion, was enabled by King Ludwig II, who had intervened decisively in Wagner's life the previous year, offering him apparently endless funds (welcome) allied to advice and well-meaning interventions (less welcome). Wagner's attempt to get the work performed at

The inspiration behind the opera:
Wagner's lover Mathilde Wesendonck

his own instigation proved fruitless: it famously went through 77 rehearsals at the Hofoper in Vienna in 1863 before the orchestra declared it unplayable. The premiere of the work itself, delayed by a month much to the delight of the hostile elements in Munich, might be counted a modest success. The title-roles were taken by the husband-and-wife team of Ludwig and Malvina Schnorr von Carolsfeld, the former an artist who Wagner admired perhaps above any other singer he worked with.

That the tenor died a matter of weeks after the event, however, only contributed to the legends that surrounded the new work: not only was it incomprehensible and morally reprehensible and dangerous, its detractors noted, it was also *literally* dangerous. Its moral dubiousness was, and to a large extent still is, underlined by the biographical circumstances of the work's composition and earlier history, a series of hardly innocent facts to which no one was afraid to add additional untruths. Wagner's affair with Mathilde Wesendonck in the 1850s, while he was being hosted in Zurich by Mathilde's wealthy husband (and now usually believed to have remained unconsummated), had inspired the composition. Wagner's relationship with Cosima, meanwhile, had begun in earnest in 1863 and produced a daughter, Isolde, born exactly two months before the opera was premiered under the baton of Hans von Bülow. Von Bülow was still Cosima's husband at the time, and the little girl was given his surname, but no one was fooled.

Wagner was disconsolate, depressed by the uncomprehending reactions of the public, but *Tristan* had at least been unleashed on the world, although it would wait another nine years for a second staging, in Weimar. After Liszt saw it there in 1875 he wrote to Princess Carolyne zu Sayn-Wittgenstein:

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‘One felt overwhelmed, ravished, and enraptured all at the same time – in several places one could only weep!’ He added: ‘After so poignant a work I do not know what will be left for our opera composers to do.’ Which brings us back to the question raised implicitly by *Kobbé*: how did *Tristan* change opera? Certainly for composers producing operas there was a difficulty of stepping out of Wagner’s shadow, and that of *Tristan*, perhaps best exemplified by the fact that even while at work on *Turandot* well over half a century after that Munich premiere, Puccini felt the pressure. He reportedly picked up his score of *Tristan*, before swiftly putting it back down, exclaiming: ‘Enough of this music! We’re mandolinists, amateurs: woe to him who gets caught by it! This tremendous music destroys one and renders one incapable of composing any more!’

TRISTAN ON STAGE

No opera produced in a spirit of direct emulation of *Tristan* has survived in the repertory, while the ramped-up chromaticism of works by Schreker and Korngold – music which perhaps took up the *Tristan* mantle more than that of any others – often leaves one longing for Wagner’s economy of means. Eventually Strauss found his way of dealing with it through parody, overt or subtle, in the mockingly *Tristan*-esque duet of *Feuersnot*, the ‘perverted Liebestod’ of *Salome* (as Michael Kennedy described the final scene in his *Master Musicians* volume on Strauss), or the knowing references in *Der Rosenkavalier*, such as in Octavian and the Marschallin’s own musing on the phrase ‘du und ich’ (‘you and I’) in their post-coital first scene.

Tristan also changed forever what opera could be expected to do, and how it was to be performed. The expectations on the singers are unprecedented, and still to this day Tristans, in particular, seem rarely to be judged by how *good* they are. The greatest, it seems, are those whose inevitable shortfall in realising Wagner’s unrealistic demands – one is reminded of Wagner’s promise to his publisher that the work would be easy to stage and economically favourable – is the least. In terms of staging, it certainly became clear at the premiere that



Kirsten Flagstad recorded Isolde with Furtwängler for EMI in 1952



‘World-leading Isolde’: Nina Stemme in David McVicar’s Vienna State Opera production, 2013

King Ludwig’s penchant for pseudo-medieval costumes and decorations – given concrete form in the Disney-esque folly of his castle at Neuschwanstein – was fundamentally ill-suited to a work which, according to the German critic Paul Bekker, put ‘sounds not people’ on the stage. Ever since Alfred Roller started to introduce expressionistic touches to his famous designs for Mahler’s 1903 Vienna Opera staging,

productions have moved increasingly into the realm of ‘suggestion’ rather than ‘illusion’, to borrow the distinction by the Swiss stage designer and theorist Adolphe Appia. One could spend a lifetime watching *Tristan* in the opera house today without seeing so much as a ship or castle on the stage.

Here the libretto plays an important part, too: laconic and ambiguous, it often consists of language that writhes tortuously to express the inexpressible, threatening, in the vast love duet of Act 2, to collapse into something like nonsense. Even Isolde’s Narration in the First Act seems to tell a nebulous, dreamlike

story. The basics of the plot – putative adultery between Tristan and Isolde, their discovery by King Marke, Tristan’s injury and death – can seem like little more than a simple scaffold around which Wagner was able to build an expression of the negative Schopenhauerian philosophy under whose spell he composed the work in the 1850s. For once, Wagner’s definition of ‘music drama’ – formulated less in seriousness than in a spirit of mocking jest – as ‘deeds of music made visible’ seems appropriate.



Herbert von Karajan with his *Tristan* and Isolde, Jon Vickers and Helga Dernesch

TRISTAN ON RECORD

This might suggest that *Tristan* would be particularly well suited to recording. And bearing in mind Wagner's letter to Mathilde, in which he expressed concern that a good stage performance of *Tristan* would be enough to send anyone mad, Tanner suggests that hearing the opera on record has one major advantage:

'It enables us to stop and wait until we can cope with Act 3; an advantage the tenor singing Tristan must still be more grateful for.' Right from the very first major studio recording of the work – Fürtwängler for Walter Legge's EMI in 1952 – the advantages of the studio have been exploited. Famously, Kirsten Flagstad, some way past her prime as Isolde, would only record the role if her diminished top notes could be bolstered by Elisabeth Schwarzkopf. Three decades later, Carlos Kleiber's DG recording allowed us to hear Margaret Price as the fiery Irish princess, a role she never came anywhere near performing on stage, though we'll only ever have an imperfect idea of what Kleiber was aiming for in this recording of the sole Wagner opera he ever conducted. Disagreements during the sessions led to him walking out, leaving the project unfinished. DG's producer, however, had kept the microphones on during rehearsals, and managed to put together a complete performance, released two years after the conductor had abandoned the recording.

Karl Böhm's famous Bayreuth set, recorded by DG in an empty Festspielhaus in 1966, rattles through the score at some lick, while Leonard Bernstein's remarkable Philips recording, taped act by act in concerts in Munich in 1981, can seem like an experiment in pushing the boundaries of interpretative possibility. Karajan, in his EMI recording, seems to view the work as a grand symphony, into which the singers often feel poorly integrated, while Antonio Pappano's 2005 set, also for EMI, is perhaps best enjoyed as an early record of Nina Stemme's world-leading Isolde (also captured on Marek Janowski's live-in-concert set for Pentatone). No paid-up Wagnerian would want to be without many of these, or the studio recordings by Solti, Goodall and Barenboim. But it's surely significant that when Mike Ashman surveyed the work's discography in these pages (9/06), it was a live recording that came top of the 65 then extant versions: Knappertsbusch's 1950 set, on Orfeo, from the Bavarian State Opera.

Perhaps this leaves us with one conclusion to draw about *Tristan*, a work so fascinatingly woven through with contradictions: despite its outlandish demands, it still belongs in the opera house, the very institution it changed forever. **G**

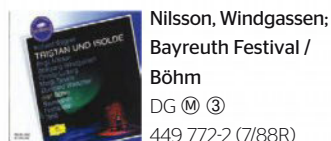
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Very much of the studio, Kleiber's
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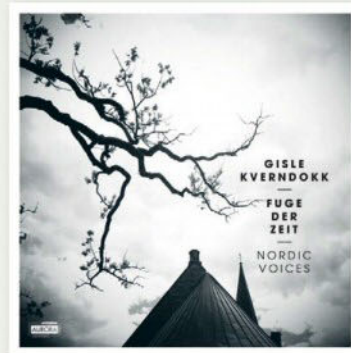
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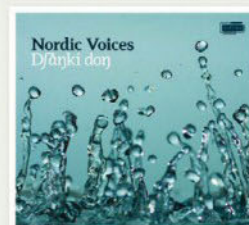


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For the fourth consecutive year, Gramophone has invited readers to vote for the performers, producers, engineers and label executives who have shaped the classical music recording industry. In the following pages you can discover the 10 names we welcome into the Gramophone Hall of Fame, joining an already illustrious list of members

GRAMOPHONE HALL OF FAME



MICHAEL TILSON THOMAS

(b1944) Conductor

Celebrating 20 years at the helm of the San Francisco Symphony, Michael Tilson Thomas has held posts with the London Symphony Orchestra and founded the New World Symphony in Miami. He has recorded extensively for DG, RCA and the SFS's own label.

MEMBERS OF THE LSO

The LSO was always swashbuckling. And Michael helped us channel those energies! He saw the bigger picture – that people needed to work together more – and the LSO made some good decisions with him.’ (Andrew Marriner, clarinet.) ‘Many people talk about breaking down barriers between the listener and the performer and finding new avenues. But Michael has done it! He’s made it all happen. MTT is in his element sharing music with people.’ (David Alberman, second violin.) ‘How he communicates is amazing. At rehearsals he always says hello to everyone. And if you are a new face he always says: “Hello friend. What’s your name?” and finds out about them. That’s so refreshing.’ (Belinda McFarlane and Maxine Kwok-Adams, violinists.)

RECOMMENDED RECORDING

Mahler Symphony No 6
San Francisco Symphony /
Michael Tilson Thomas

SFS Media/Avie ® ②
821936 0001-2 (5/02)



SIR NEVILLE MARRINER

(b1924) Conductor

Founder, in 1958, and conductor of the Academy of St Martin in the Fields, Marriner has also held posts with the Los Angeles Chamber, Minnesota and Stuttgart Radio orchestras. With the ASMF, he has probably made more recordings than any other conductor.

LISE DE LA SALLE *Pianist*

I grew up with Sir Neville's recordings: his music has been with me since my childhood. Also, when I discovered the film *Amadeus*, at the age of 10, it was almost like a drug! I watched it every night over and over; and the music obviously played a leading role. It was only later that I learnt that the soundtrack was recorded by Sir Neville. I remember the day my agent told me I was going to tour with him – what joy! I was obviously nervous before the first rehearsal. We did not talk, he just smiled at me and started the opening *tutti* of the D minor Concerto, No 20, by Mozart. Everything just disappeared: only the music mattered. Sir Neville is one of those rare conductors who convey – with both force and simplicity – all the grandeur of the music. Recently we played Mozart's Piano Concerto No 23 together; working with Sir Neville is a great joy, everything seems so natural. He combines tradition, spontaneity, freedom and fidelity to the text in a unique way.

RECOMMENDED RECORDING

Rossini *Il barbiere di Siviglia*

Sols; ASMF / Neville Marriner

Decca © ② 478 2497DB2 (6/83rd)



ANGELA HEWITT

(b1958) Pianist

Celebrated for her Bach recordings, Hewitt's repertoire is broad and takes in Mozart's piano concertos, Beethoven's piano sonatas, Schumann and French piano music. She records for Hyperion.

HANNU LINTU *Conductor*

A performance with Angela Hewitt is always a joy, shared by her colleagues and audience. Her airy, inventive and bright touch never ceases to amaze me. She crowns her visionary feel for tempo by adding colour to the texture in precisely the right way.

For Angela, the foundation for everything is Bach, but despite – or maybe precisely because of – this, she is at home in works by all the great composers: as an interpreter, she is a true match for Mozart, Beethoven, Liszt and Messiaen. Personally, I particularly prize the Schumann Piano Concerto we recorded together.

From her I have learnt the importance of paying infinite attention to the notes on the page, and just how much a successful performance depends not only on inspiration and skill but also on endless background work.

Angela is one of the few whose discs have the feel of a live performance. The overall picture is crystal-clear. Her vision and dialogue with the composer's spirit are astoundingly well-balanced. If and when the record industry still has a future, it will be thanks to musicians like Angela Hewitt.

RECOMMENDED RECORDING

Liszt *Piano Sonata in B minor*

Angela Hewitt *pf*

Hyperion © CDA68067 (3/15)



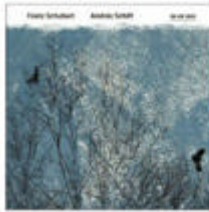
SIR ANDRÁS SCHIFF

(b1953) Pianist

The Hungarian pianist (and increasingly often conductor) recorded extensively for Decca before moving to ECM, where he focuses on a repertoire that ranges from Bach to Beethoven and Schubert.

JED DISTLER *Reviewer*

András Schiff may be the Busoni of his generation. His physically and intellectually demanding programmes grow more epic in size and scope as they sharpen in focus, from the Bach *Goldberg* and Beethoven *Diabelli* variations in one evening to Schumann marathons and volumes of Schubert sonatas. Yet for all his uncompromising vision and scholarship, Schiff is never pedantic. Eschewing received opinion and easy interpretative solutions, his fastidious attention to detail nearly always puts a fresh spin on works we think we know well. Schiff is also aware of how timbral and tactile distinctions between piano brands and vintages can lend themselves more to certain works than others. At the same time, he consistently strives to 'sing' at the piano. Schiff approaches the concerto repertoire as a collaborator rather than as a star soloist, and the same holds true for his work as a conductor, either at the keyboard or on the podium.



RECOMMENDED RECORDING

Schubert Piano Sonatas Nos 18 and 21, etc

András Schiff *fp*

ECM New Series © 481 1572 (see page 22)



KATHLEEN FERRIER

(1912-53) Contralto

Though she died at 41, Ferrier established herself as one of the greatest singers of her age, leaving classic recordings of Gluck's Orfeo, Mahler's Das Lied von der Erde and the folksong 'Blow the wind southerly'.

NATHALIE STUTZMANN *Contralto and conductor*

The contralto voice is a voice from the shadows.

Kathleen Ferrier was the first woman who managed to bring it into the light. At a time when taste tends increasingly to the brilliance, the artifice and the registers of the high voice, listening to Kathleen Ferrier is like a soothing balm for the soul. It's a rare voice, strange, disturbing. Often disliked by those who do not understand it; adored by those open to its prime quality: the natural proximity, the intimacy that resonates within you as if you were physically and directly connected to all the vibrations inside the body of the singer.

Kathleen Ferrier – because of her nature, the obvious sincerity of her personality, her ability to move us, her musicality, her kindly and radiant simplicity that is reflected so well in the colours of her voice – has become a myth. It still inspires us. To quote the poet Yves Bonnefoy: 'It seems that you know both sides, the extreme joy and extreme pain there, down among the grey reeds in the light, it seems that you draw from the eternal.'

RECOMMENDED RECORDING

Mahler Das Lied von der Erde

Kathleen Ferrier *contr* VPO / Bruno Walter

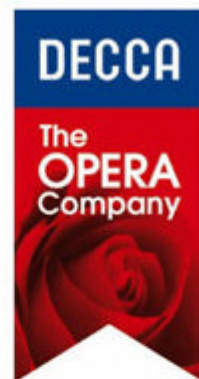
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MARC-ANDRÉ HAMELIN

(b1961) Pianist

The Canadian player's Hyperion catalogue grows by the month, offering an astounding range of repertoire that embraces music of remarkable virtuosity.

BRYCE MORRISON *Reviewer*

Few pianists have created a more astonishing discography than Marc-André Hamelin. Who else would, or could, have launched their career on record with William Bolcom's *Etudes*, Stefan Wolpe's *Battle Piece* and Sophie-Carmen Eckhardt-Gramatté's six sonatas? Discs of Alkan, complete cycles of Scriabin and Medtner sonatas and the Chopin-Godowsky *Etudes* (to mention but a few) followed, all played with a seemingly nonchalant

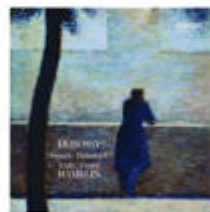
mastery and an intensely musical virtuosity. The legend continued with 'In a State of Jazz' and a recital of Hamelin's own *Etudes*.

Today such dazzle is complemented by more intimate and introspective but no less memorable offerings of music by Mozart, Haydn, Debussy and Janáček. Hamelin's range is limitless and with discs on the horizon of Rachmaninov, Ravel and, hopefully, Schubert, what else could one wish for?

RECOMMENDED RECORDING

Debussy Images, Books 1 & 2. *Préludes*, Book 2

Marc-André Hamelin *pf*
Hyperion Ⓢ
CDA67920 (11/14)



HANS HOTTER

(1909-2003) Bass-baritone

The leading Wagnerian bass-baritone of his generation, his finest achievements on disc range from Bach cantatas to Strauss and Wagner operas and Schubert Lieder.

ROBERT LLOYD *Bass*

Hans Hotter was a remarkable singer, endowed with a uniquely resonant, free throated voice which is always instantly identifiable. As a young singer I had two recordings of *Winterreise*, one of Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau and the other of Hans Hotter. After the creamy, intense intellectualism of Fischer-Dieskau, which seemed out of reach, Hotter's reading had a directness, a tender sadness which profoundly moved me and greatly shaped

the way I wanted to sing. He coached me at one time on the role of Gurnemanz, and I came to understand the hugeness of his voice and the extraordinary skill with which he could refine it. The emotional impact of it was similar to the image of a very big man nursing a newborn baby. At the other extreme few will forget how he could shake the rafters with Wotan's Farewell. He was a giant among singers. We are unlikely to see his kind again.

RECOMMENDED RECORDING

Schubert *Winterreise*

Hans Hotter *bass-bar*
Gerald Moore *pf*
Warner Classics Ⓢ ②
993726-2 (4/55^R)



RENATA TEBALDI

(1922-2004) Soprano

One of the greatest Italian sopranos of the post-war period, Tebaldi was often lined up as the rival of Maria Callas. She recorded many of her key roles for Decca.

DAVID PATRICK STEARNS *Reviewer*

Suddenly, there she was – Renata Tebaldi – at the entrance of the rehearsal hall, not expected for this orchestral run-through but fully warmed up and singing on cue with that trademark sound and generosity of spirit that wasn't some recording-studio creation but the full flowering of Italian opera singing through the centuries.

The occasion was a late-1960s *Otello* at Philadelphia Lyric Opera – an adoring haven for a singer with a strictly defined,



conservative repertoire. While Maria Callas was the diva of the future, Tebaldi reaffirmed tradition. Though not one to probe the psychological depths of her characters, Tebaldi could, nonetheless, arrive at the same artistic end point as Callas. The grainy, black-and-white 1958 television video of *La forza del destino* from San Carlo (Hardy Classics) tells that story: Tebaldi moves, acts and sings with

a conviction that her detractors claimed she lacked.

When listening to her Decca-label recordings, one is hard pressed to decide where her voice had the greatest allure. The tranquillity of her low-vibrato soft singing? Her enveloping, tactile *fortissimos*? Or the unaffected sweetness that made Verdi's various Leonoras as guileless as they claimed to be? All of the above.

RECOMMENDED RECORDING

Puccini

Madama Butterfly
Sols; Orchestra
dell'Accademia
Nazionale di Santa
Cecilia / Tullio Serafin
Decca Ⓢ ②
478 4153DM2 (2/59^R)



SIR ANTONIO PAPPANO

(b1959) Conductor and pianist

Music Director of both the Royal Opera, Covent Garden, and Rome's Orchestra dell'Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia.

JONAS KAUFMANN Tenor

Sometimes I really was lucky. For instance, when I got the chance to work with Tony Pappano. When we met way back in Brussels I realised that at the time I wasn't half as good as to fulfil his expectations. But he always had this wonderful way of inspiring everyone to lift things up for the greater good. Since then we've done many things and I've noticed that he still is there for us from the first rehearsal, getting to know the production and the singers, in order to help, suggest, support, improve. It's always exciting, always inspiring and always fun. I will never forget that moment after we had recorded Canio's monologue 'Ridi, Pagliaccio' for my 'Verismo' album. 'We made it, we made it!' we screamed, hugging each other, laughing and dancing in the studio like kids. Tony is a great musician, one of the species that has become so rare nowadays: a real theatre conductor. And for me he's much more than that: a tower of strength in the ups and downs of our business. And a very good friend.

RECOMMENDED RECORDING

Puccini *Madama Butterfly*

Sols; Orchestra and Chorus dell'Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia / Antonio Pappano

Warner Classics Ⓢ ② 264187-2 (3/09)



CHRISTOPHER HOGWOOD

(1941-2014) Conductor, keyboard player, scholar and broadcaster

One of the giants of the early music world, Hogwood is celebrated for his extensive catalogue for Decca's L'Oiseau-Lyre label.

ROBERT LEVIN Pianist

Christopher Hogwood was a musical polymath whose work shaped our understanding of early music. An accomplished clavichordist, harpsichordist and fortepianist, and founder of the Academy of Ancient Music, he transformed Boston's Handel and Haydn Society into a period orchestra and conducted numerous period and standard instrument orchestras worldwide. His repertoire interests extended into the present; among the 20th-century composers whose work he enthusiastically advocated was Martinů.

Through his prolific recordings of operatic, orchestral and chamber works, Hogwood was able to bring his message of historically-informed performances of 18th- and early-19th-century music with the AAM and H&H, and of more recent repertoire through performances and recordings with the Kammerorchester Basel, to a global audience. Despite an active concert career he was able to pursue a broad spectrum of scholarly endeavours.

My collaboration with Christopher Hogwood spanned 20 years, a partnership that I shall forever treasure. He was an uncommon synthesis of wisdom, enthusiasm, stylistic understanding and reflection. I shall miss him keenly.

RECOMMENDED RECORDING

Handel *Messiah* (remastered 2014)

Soloists; AAM / Christopher Hogwood

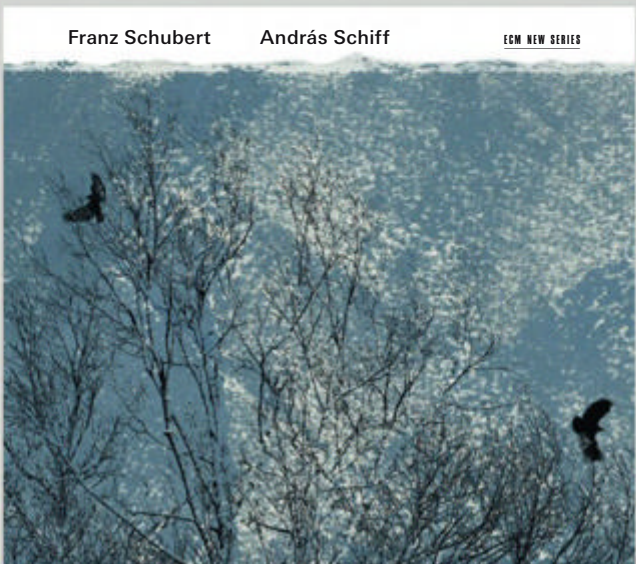
L'Oiseau Lyre Ⓢ ③ ② + ④ 478 8160DH3 (4/80[®])



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GRAMOPHONE

RECORDING OF THE MONTH

Stephen Plaistow acclaims András Schiff's two-CD disc of keyboard music by Schubert – played on a piano dating from the composer's lifetime



Schubert

Piano Sonatas – No 18, D894; No 21, D960.
Allegretto, D915. Four Impromptus, D935.
Hungarian Melody, D817.
Six Moments musicaux, D780

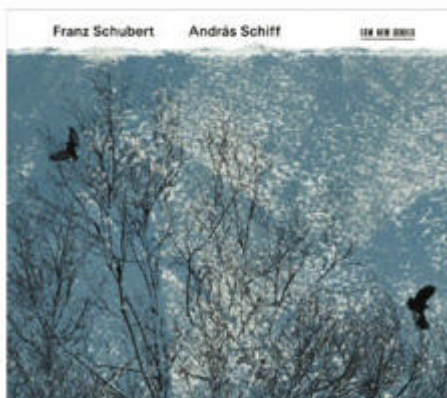
Sir András Schiff *pf*

ECM New Series © ② 481 1572
(145' • DDD)

This is something special and I urge everyone interested in the discography of Schubert's piano music to hear it. Unsure about the old instrument? Could it really be adequate to encompass the sonorities and range of expression in this wide selection of works, including two of Schubert's greatest sonatas? I would say, do not hold back.

Schiff himself says he was a slow convert, from the times some 30 years ago when people took up embattled positions about 'authenticity', for and against, and arrogance and dogma prevailed. 'Are you one of us?' as Mrs Thatcher might have enquired. Schiff, on the outside looking in, saw that many of the instruments then were not in prime condition and he kept a beady eye too on the practitioners, who were often not awfully good.

But curiosity kept him interested and the joy he has always taken in playing on wonderful instruments, whatever their provenance and pedigree, with each of them individual in character, sustained him. He believes, I am sure, that there is the closest connection between an instrument and the music written for it; and while he does



'In Schubert he has a claim to be considered sovereign among today's players...Schiff is, perhaps, Brendel's successor'

not deny himself the pleasure of playing Schubert on the modern piano, he counts it as important to retain the illumination and inspiration that are to be gained from the Viennese fortepiano of Schubert's day.

There were more than a hundred makers in the city and the instrument here, from around 1820, is by Franz Brodmann, brother of the better known Joseph whose apprentice Ignaz Bösendorfer took over the firm in 1828. It came into the possession of the Austro-Hungarian imperial family, and the last Austrian emperor and Hungarian king took it with him when he was exiled to Switzerland after the First World War. Its restoration in 1965 was carefully done and András Schiff acquired it in 2010; since then its home has been the Beethoven-Haus in Bonn, on loan, where this fine recording was made a year ago. Whenever he plays Schubert, he says, its sweet tone and its sound in a small hall will always remain in the back of his mind.

Its basic speaking tone is *piano* and of course it cannot match a modern instrument in strength and brilliance. Yet its dynamic range is wide and when the 'moderator' pedal is in action – there are four pedals in all – the softest *ppp* passages, which are not rare in Schubert, can be realised as a nuance distinct from the *pianissimos* produced by the soft pedal. In the other direction it is capable of a degree beyond *fortissimo* as well, and at all dynamic levels the sound carries, with a tender mellowness of timbre as the norm. Concert-goers found that, with a master pianist, it easily inhabited the space



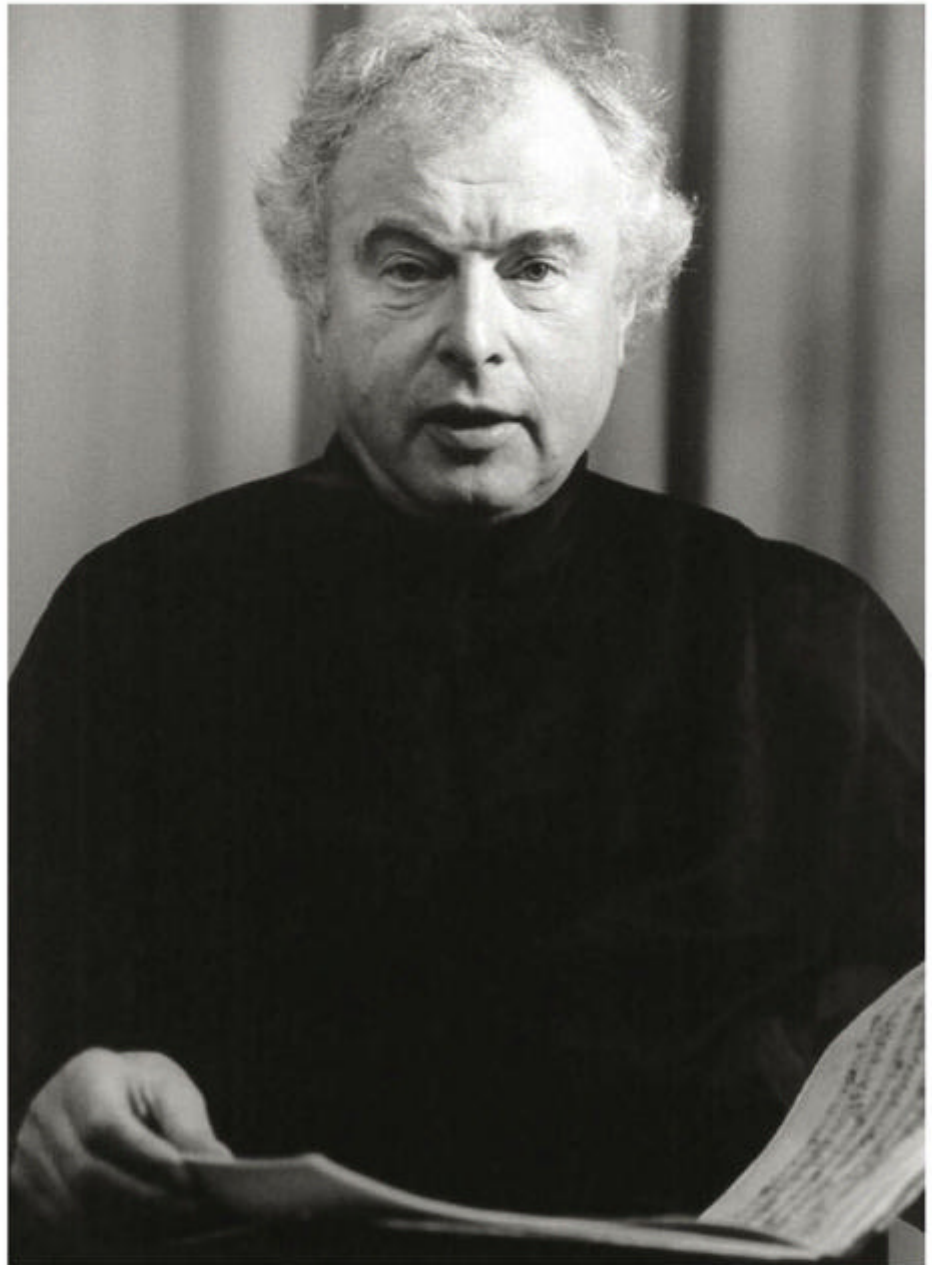
András Schiff's Franz Brodmann fortepiano, in its home at the Beethoven-Haus Bonn

of the Wigmore Hall, where Schiff gave acclaimed recitals on it at the beginning of this year. If you're quick you may be able to catch him in Oxford in August.

As we heard in his earlier recording for ECM of the Beethoven *Diabelli* Variations and the last set of Bagatelles (12/13), this Brodmann is no shrinking violet. It encompasses Schubert's mighty climaxes and dramatic eruptions as well as those passages of inwardness and quietude when this composer touches us 'like nobody else'. The point to be stressed is that nothing is lacking: instrument and music are one, ideally matched, convincing us that the one couldn't have been written the way it is without the other. Try the exquisite Allegretto in C minor, D915, once memorably recorded by Schnabel, for a vivid sample of the world of sound that the Brodmann opens up (disc 2, tr 1); or the first-movement exposition of the B flat major Sonata, D960, for a picture of how it matches the ambition of Schubert's writing on the broadest scale (disc 2, tr 6).

Let us not forget the messenger! I have long counted András Schiff as one of those artists able to surprise as well as delight – only the best do that. In his favoured repertoires of Bach, Mozart, Beethoven and Schubert (and his Haydn, Schumann and Bartók must not be overlooked), he has shown a continual deepening of response together with many new insights, and he has kept his music-making fresh. What we have here, which is hugely welcome, has come about through work done following a realisation that his former knowledge of historical keyboard instruments had been perfunctory. I cannot think of anyone of his calibre who has mastered the fortepiano as well as the modern piano and shown such distinction on both. In Schubert he has a claim to be considered sovereign among today's players, carrying forward the reading and interpretation of him into areas that others have not fully explored. I would not be without the recent achievements of Mitsuko Uchida, Imogen Cooper, Paul Lewis and others; nor of course of Alfred Brendel. Schiff is, perhaps, Brendel's successor.

I like above all the way he conveys Schubert's wonderful instinct for the sound of the instrument. This side of the composer has not perhaps been celebrated as well as it might. These days we do better at understanding how dramatic the sonatas are and the part that dark forces play in them. Certainly we underestimate Schubert if we regard



Sovereign among today's Schubert players: András Schiff revealing new colours in the composer's piano works

him as a permanent lyricist. And I don't believe his sonatas are bounded by the poetic melancholy and air of resignation that some players give us to excess. It's astounding that he developed a range of piano sound in the way he did, given that he was not a virtuoso player and didn't even own an instrument for periods of his life. This was born, surely, out of deep love for the piano of his time such as this lovely example, with its transparency as well as fullness of sound, the distinct characters of its registers – treble, middle and bass, not homogenised – and its capacity to place the elements of melody and harmony in new relationships of colour and balance. What a lot he added to piano-writing. Savour and enjoy it here. **G**

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Editor's Choice

Martin Cullingford's pick of the finest recordings reviewed in this issue

Orchestral



David Gutman on Iván Fischer's Mahler Ninth from Budapest:

'Turn to Fischer and everything snaps into focus: it's as if Mahler's black-and-white classic had been colourised' ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 31**



William Yeoman listens to Vivaldi from a violinist/singer/conductor:

'One would have to travel far to find another musician as outrageously gifted as Dmitry Sinkovskiy' ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 38**

Albéniz · Granados

'The Romantic Piano Concerto, Vol 65'
Albéniz Piano Concerto No 1, 'Concierto fantástico', Op 78. Rapsodia española
Granados Piano Concerto, 'Patético'
Melani Mestre *pf* **BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra / Martyn Brabbins**
Hyperion Ⓢ CDA67918 (77' • DDD)



This absorbing disc, the 65th in Hyperion's endlessly enterprising 'Romantic Piano

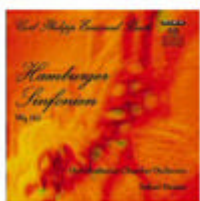
Concerto' series, juxtaposes the Albéniz Concerto with two first recordings: his *Rapsodia española* in the San Sebastián version, and Granados's C minor *Concierto patético* in a reconstruction of fragments by the pianist Melani Mestre. Oddly subtitled *Fantástico*, the Concerto shows little trace of either Albéniz's early picture-postcard Spain or the later marvels of his masterpiece, *Iberia*.

Very much for those who like music that makes few demands, it was elegantly described on its first London performance as 'pleasing though not lofty in design'. Certainly the second movement's breezy seaside tune will set heads nodding and feet tapping, and it is remarkable that the authentically Spanish *Rapsodia española* was completed at the same time as the Concerto. Sultry and Moorish before bursting out into all the fun of the feria, the *Rapsodia* is hard to resist and will appeal to those in love with all things southern and Spanish.

Yet the chief interest lies in the Granados, solemn and declamatory in the first movement before leaving its C minor sense of elegy to recall two earlier *Spanish Dances* and the composer's one unabashed showpiece, the *Allegro de concierto*. Musical adventure could hardly go further. Impeccably recorded, all the performances by Melani Mestre and the BBC Scottish Orchestra under Martyn Brabbins are of an unfaltering fluency and stylistic command.
Bryce Morrison

CPE Bach

Six 'Hamburg' Symphonies, Wq182
Ostrobothnian Chamber Orchestra / Sakari Oramo
Alba Ⓢ ABCD374 (63' • DDD/DSD)



Unfettered personal feelings burst forth; calm mingling with turbulence and

harmonic disruption leap off the page at every turn. Sakari Oramo appears not to be entirely sure. Bach categorises three *allegro* first movements (Nos 1, 2 and 6) as *Allegro di molto*, one (No 3) as *Allegro assai*, yet Oramo doesn't fully honour their distinctions; speed, accentuation and articulation veer towards equalising their individual characters. Conversely, in the slow movements of Nos 1 and 2 he is too fast for *Poco adagio*; and though his phrasing is good, the spirit of 'sensitive style' (*empfindsamer Stil*) is in scarce supply. All too often instrumental textures lack transparency, and rhythm isn't as fleet of foot as it might be. Both factors inhibit the motive force of many a movement, though not in No 5. Oramo is on his mettle here, earlier flaws not repeated, the slow-movement *Larghetto* conducted with profound feeling.

The virtue of this disc lies in the skilled musicians of the OCO, who probably would have given Oramo a lot more if only he had asked. Trevor Pinnock's recording, still remarkable after 36 years, is better at reflecting Bach's unorthodoxy. But it's Wolfram Christ who gets closest to the qualities enshrined in this radical music, and enhances its prescience by using a fortepiano – in Bach's day fast replacing the harpsichord – for the written-out keyboard contribution, enterprisingly realised by Sebastian Küchler-Blessing. Christ's violins are separated too, a positive gain in the many antiphonal exchanges. **Nalen Anthoni**

Selected comparisons:

English Concert, Pinnock (10/80th) (ARCH) 477 5000.ABL
Stuttgart CO, Christ (4/14) (HANS) CD98 637

JS Bach · Schnittke

JS Bach Violin Concertos – BWV1041^a; BWV1042^b; Double Concerto, BWV1043^{ab}.
Two-Part Inventions^c – BWV772; BWV779
Schnittke Concerto grosso No 3^{ab}

^aDeborah Nemtanu *vn/cva* ^{bc}Sarah Nemtanu *vn*
Paris Chamber Orchestra / Sascha Goetzel
Naïve Ⓢ V5383 (68' • DDD)



The Nemtanu sisters – Sarah, leader of the French National Orchestra, and

Deborah, leader of the Paris Chamber Orchestra – have each made recordings on their own but come together here in what would surely be the first choice for any violin siblings, Bach's Double Concerto. Their performance is attractive and neatly turned, especially in a tenderly flowing slow movement, though some listeners may wish for more drive in the finale. The chance to compare the two players comes in the solo concertos. Sarah seems a little coy in the outer movements of the E major, a touch too delicate perhaps, her frequent little *piano* feints bordering on the precious. The pleasantly light-paced slow movement, however, is sweetly spun, with the orchestra keeping what can often be an oppressive ostinato-like bass pattern well under control. Deborah is more assertive in her account of the A minor, throwing cheeky little ornaments into the first movement, finding the lyrical depth in the second, but losing some energy in a slightly sluggish gigue-finale.

More duo-Bach is provided by a pair of short *Two-Part Inventions* on violin and viola, each tidily played and enlivened with cute little embellishments, but the disc is rounded off not with more Baroque but with the third of Schnittke's six Concerti grossi. This is not a pastiche but a work that subverts Baroque-style patterns and gestures with static textures, moody harpsichord solos, a celesta, bells, gruffly resonant harmonies and soaring violins in a manner reminiscent of Tippett's string-

orchestra music, though without the same heady lyricism. Some toy-like, motoric circlings provide an enigmatic ending. The performance is a vibrant one, although as in the Bach I found the Paris Chamber Orchestra a touch distant. **Lindsay Kemp**

Boccherini • Haydn

'La Passione'

Boccherini Cello Concerto, G480^a. Sinfonia, G522 **Haydn** Violin Concerto No 1, HobVIIa/1^b. Symphony No 44, 'Trauer'

^a**Stefano Veggetti** vc

Ensemble Cordia / Erich Höbarth ^bvn

Fra Bernardo © FB1408381 (75' • DDD)



'Even when not written out, a single bassoon is always present to double the

basses. There was certainly no harpsichord or other continuo. No keyboard player is ever mentioned in the meticulously kept list of Boccherini's players.' So says Antonio de Almeida, editor of Doblinger's Edition of Boccherini's symphonies. Yet Erich Höbarth adds an obtrusive harpsichord to G522 (1792) which blurs some bass-lines and compromises the individual characters of all the movements. The instruction *sempre sotto voce* in the slow movement is ignored too. Less invasive continuo in only the outer-movement *tutti*s of the Cello Concerto, however, keeps the textures clean for Stefano Veggetti's very superior control of his solo part.

Discretion recedes in Haydn's C major Violin Concerto, where a cembalo is actually specified; but whereas Gottfried von der Goltz incorporates the harpsichord into the texture, Höbarth allows it to drive a prominently inflexible rhythm in the outer movements. And, excepting the slow movement, it's in the limelight again for Haydn's Symphony No 44, in which Höbarth, who directs rather than conducts, relies on its chattering presence. Ignore it if possible and you'll hear a good if sometimes turgid performance; but the emotional confrontations in the music escape Höbarth, as they also do in Boccherini's G522, an intense work from a composer once called 'Haydn's wife'.

Nalen Anthoni

Haydn Vn Conc – selected comparison:

Von der Goltz, Freiburg Baroque Orch

(A/09⁸) (HARM) HMX296 2029 or HMA195 2029

Brahms • Bruch

'Timeless'

Brahms Violin Concerto, Op 77

Bruch Violin Concerto No 1, Op 26

David Garrett vn

Israel Philharmonic Orchestra / Zubin Mehta

Decca © 481 1031 (64' • DDD)



Apart from bearing the title 'Timeless' and including several moody photos of

David Garrett, this issue has no links to his rock-star status. As it's likely to attract listeners outside the mainstream classical audience, it's pleasant to report that Garrett's performances of these two familiar works are fine ones indeed. Paying close attention to the composers' dynamics, articulation and changes of tempo, he gives vigorous and persuasive accounts of both concertos. For instance, the second subject of the Bruch first movement only slows at the marked *ritardando* and for the *poco più lento*, conveying the sense of nostalgia without any hint of sentimentality. And, throughout both concertos, his playing shows crisp precision, bold confidence and genuine, heartfelt expression.

However, I wouldn't place either performance close to the top of my list for these much-recorded works. For one thing, the recorded sound isn't ideal; there's a good overall blend but it's not quite clearly defined, with the timpani tending to be too prominent, especially in the Brahms. And though the orchestral playing is technically assured, there's sometimes an air of routine. And despite the strong virtues of Garrett's performance, he doesn't match the youthful passion and enthusiasm of Guro Kleven Hagen in the Bruch, nor the imaginative grasp and inspiring range of tone of Batiashvili, with a luminously recorded Dresden Staatskapelle under Christian Thielemann, in the Brahms.

Duncan Druce

Brahms – selected comparison:

Batiashvili, Staatskapelle Dresden, Thielemann

(4/13) (DG) 479 0086GH

Bruch – selected comparison:

Kleven Hagen, Oslo PO, Engset (8/14) (SIMA) PSC1266

Brian

Festal Dance. Symphonies – No 5,

'Wine of Summer'^a; No 19; No 27

^a**Roderick Williams** bar **Royal Scottish**

National Orchestra / Martyn Brabbins

Dutton Epoch © CDLX7314 (65' • DDD/DSD)



This disc is something special. It features some of Brian's most attractive scores –

including one of my very favourites, the *Wine of Summer* Symphony (1937), an earlier recording attempt of which foundered many years ago – and some of the best playing any Brian works have received, as well as vibrantly clear sound quality. This allows every detail of Brian's unique scoring to be heard; the effect in the early *Festal Dance* (1908) and Fifth Symphony in particular is stunning.

The Royal Scottish National Orchestra's performances are beautifully balanced and idiomatic. Brabbins, who has now become Brian's foremost living exponent, directs with complete understanding of the idiom and the orchestra responds with élan. Roderick Williams is an ideal soloist in *Wine of Summer*, his superbly nuanced rendering of Brian's notes and Lord Alfred Douglas's verses fully the equal of Brian Rayner Cook's pioneering interpretations last century.

Symphony No 19 (1961) is a *scherzo*-like work in a fast-slow-fast format, brighter in texture and rhythmically vivid, which may account for why at one time the symphony bore a subtitle, *The Dance*, later suppressed. Symphony No 27 (1966–67) is perhaps more serious in tone but also unusually light-filled in scoring, especially in the opening movement with its atmospheric flute solos, beautifully played by Katherine Bryan (no relation). Another three-movement design, the opening *Allegro* is topped and tailed by slower opening and closing sections and the central *Lento ma non troppo* has two contrasting balletic sections. The programme opens with the third recording of *Festal Dance*; fine as Leaper's Irish account is, this newcomer is the best yet. **Guy Rickards**

Festal Dance – comparative versions:

City of Hull Youth SO, Heald-Smith

(4/81) (CAMP) RR2CD1331/2

Ireland Nat SO, Leaper (2/93) (MARC) 8 223481

Bruckner

Symphony No 3 (1888/89 version)

London Philharmonic Orchestra /

Stanisław Skrowaczewski

LPO © LPO0084 (57' • DDD)

Recorded live at the Royal Festival Hall, London, March 14, 2014



To recap: in *Gramophone's* March 2015 issue, I nominated

Bruckner's Third Symphony as his most problematic score and suggested that Yannick Nézet-Séguin's new performance with the Orchestre Métropolitain (ATMA

Classique) had made unnecessarily heavy weather of it.

And then Stanisław Skrowaczewski and the London Philharmonic come along and it's like problems, what problems? Recorded live at the South Bank in 2014, this disc follows Skrowaczewski's fine LPO performance of Bruckner's Seventh (10/13); both symphonies are, of course, incorporated into his complete cycle with the Saarbrücken Radio Symphony Orchestra (Oehms). The LPO, though, bring a warmth and holistic purity beyond the capabilities of their sourer German colleagues.

Skrowaczewski opts for Bruckner's final 1888/89 version. Aged 90, perhaps he balked at the thought of needing to stand through the lengthy original 1873 score, the version that gives Nézet-Séguin so much grief. But I reckon this structurally curt view of Bruckner's material serves Skrowaczewski's natural inclinations and conductorly instincts rather well.

He is a detail man, happy to leave flexed muscle, blood-on-the-walls Bruckner to others. Points of climax are cannily earthed in what went before; and how deftly he manages to balance the registral colour within each chord, Bruckner's rugged orchestration never allowed to tip over into blaring crudity. Yet embedded within this safe pair of hands is an underlying frisson of danger. Tempo changes tend to be flicked on and off like a light switch; but the *accelerando* during the development section becomes a dizzying set piece.

Skrowaczewski refuses to overcook the *Adagio*: Bruckner's harmonic chess moves do the work for him. The *Scherzo* – often a sticking point – relates well to the unfolding symphonic argument, while the finale is tackled with an honesty that suggests Skrowaczewski knows full well that Bruckner has overstretched himself. Yes, this movement has its longueurs, then requires the mother of all gear-changes as the coda looms, but Skrowaczewski keeps his head when, all around him, other conductors lose theirs. **Philip Clark**

Castiglioni

La Buranella. Altisonanza. Salmo XIX^a

^aTeresa Bokor, ^aSine Bundgaard sop

Danish National Concert Choir and
Symphony Orchestra / Gianandrea Noseda

Chandos © CHAN10858 (63') • DDD • T/t



Three facets of Castiglioni's homage to the past are represented on this

disc from the Danish National Symphony Orchestra, joined by the Danish National Concert Choir and the two stratospheric sopranos Teresa Bokor and Sine Bundgaard in *Salmo XIX*. The conductor is Gianandrea Noseda, who has been a major contributor to our understanding of 20th-century Italian music. In *La Buranella* (1990), Castiglioni follows in the footsteps of Respighi (*Ancient Airs and Dances*) and Stravinsky (*Pulcinella*) in going back to the music of a bygone age and giving it a new life through orchestration. Here Castiglioni chooses various harpsichord movements by Galuppi – born on Burano, hence the title *La Buranella* – and reimagines them in instrumental terms, preserving the Classical sensibility but amplifying the colour spectrum.

The simplicity of *La Buranella* presents a sharp contrast to *Altisonanza* (1990-92), a three-movement, 20-minute work with, at its centre, a Sarabanda pointing to Castiglioni's predilection for old forms. The music, though, is thoroughly contemporary, rich in energy and vibrancy, rhythmically complex and brilliantly orchestrated, with a hint of Messiaen about it in the suggestions of birdsong but with a creative personality of its own. The setting of Psalm 19 ratchets up interpretative complexity to another level altogether, with swift Baroque-sounding choral semiquaver runs pitted against syncopated exclamations and choral clusters, together with the sky-high singing of the solo sopranos and punchy orchestral activity. Not, perhaps, a setting for regular Sunday use but a powerful, fervent, haunting experience when performed as compellingly as it is here. **Geoffrey Norris**

O Davis

Flight. Voyager^a. Skyward. Air Waltz.

Airborne Dances^b. Epilogue

Kerenza Peacock vn^b Dorothea Vogel,

^bAlex Gale vas^b Philip Higham vc^b Ben Russell db

^aHuw Watkins pf London Symphony Orchestra /

Paul Bateman

Signum © SIGCD411 (50') • DDD



Mainly set down in one session, Oliver Davis's 'Flight' is a loose concept built

around the violin-playing of Kerenza Peacock. It opens with the eponymous concerto, whose joining of rhythmic incisiveness with slow-burning modal harmonies sets the course for the album as a whole, not forgetting subtleties such as the deft segueing between its final two

movements. More varied in content, *Voyager* is more expressively wide-ranging – though it is a pity that the piano part often does little more than underpin chord changes in the string-writing; the more so when Huw Watkins was on hand as a formidable exponent. Most engaging of the larger works, *Airborne Dances* is a feat of recording in which the multitracked Peacock plays several violins in the context of two violas, cello and double bass: music audacious on a production level at least.

The shorter pieces are not without their attractions – whether in the blithe syncopation of *Skyward*, the Swingle-like vocal phasing of *Air Waltz* or the gentle 'touchdown' of *Epilogue*. No quibbles as to Peacock's commitment or panache, while Paul Bateman gets a disciplined response from the London Symphony Orchestra, heard to advantage in the pristine acoustic of AIR Studios. Davis supplies the brief background note but this is not music that requires any greater introduction as such. Remaining adherents of the CD might well consider the overall playing time to be just a little ungenerous, though this is arguably one instance where more could have resulted in that much less. **Richard Whitehouse**

Dubois

'Portrait'

Symphonies – No 2; 'Française'. Piano Quartet.

Piano Sonata. Messe pontificale. Motets

Chantal Santon sop Jennifer Borghi, Marie

Kalinine mezs Mathias Vidal ten Alain Buet bar

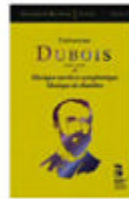
Romain Descharmes pf François Saint-Yves org

Flemish Radio Choir; Giardini Quartet; Les Siècles

/ François-Xavier Roth; Brussels Philharmonic

Orchestra / Hervé Niquet

Ediciones Singulares © ③ ES1018 (3h 14') • DDD



The first bars of this set are so startling that you momentarily suspect that there must have been a

mistake. What is Mussorgsky's *Night on the Bare Mountain* doing at the start of the Second Symphony by Théodore Dubois (1837-1924)? Alas I have no explanation, and nor does the booklet, but the demonic opening motif from *Bare Mountain* launches Dubois's symphony of 1912 and permeates the chromatic colouring of the first movement. Thereafter, Dubois follows a well-trodden Franco-German path, with nods to Franck and Mendelssohn and also with some Wagnerian inflation, but the symphony's impulse is strong and the music merits the fine performance it receives from the Brussels Philharmonic under Hervé Niquet.



Gianandrea Noseda continues his exploration of early-20th-century Italian repertoire on his new Chandos disc of Castiglioni choral and orchestral works

This is a volume in the excellent series produced by the Palazzetto Bru Zane in Venice, which devotes itself to promoting French music that enjoyed more acclaim in its day than it does now. Dubois was one of Paris's panjandrums, a Prix de Rome winner, director of the Conservatoire, organist at La Madeleine. The works here have been selected to show the breadth of his output, from a hyper-Romantic, Schumannesque A minor Piano Sonata (1908) to various religious pieces, including a full-scale *Messe pontificale* which seems to take Viennese Masses, particularly Schubert's, as a model. There is also an F minor *Symphonie française*, stirringly played by Les Siècles under François-Xavier Roth, and an A minor Piano Quartet over which shades of Franck and Schumann again loom. No innovator, perhaps, but Dubois is a pleasure to listen to. **Geoffrey Norris**

Dvořák

Violin Concerto, Op 53 B96^a. Mazurek, Op 49 B89^a. Romance, Op 11 B39^a. Humoresque, Op 101 No 7 (arr Kreisler)^b. Slavonic Dance, Op 46 No 2 (arr Kreisler)^b. Sonatina, Op 100 B183^b.

Thomas Albertus Irnberger *vn* ^b**Pavel Kašpar** *pf*

^aPrague Philharmonia / Petr Altrichter
Gramola (F) 99022 (76' • DDD/DSD)



The Austrian violinist Thomas Albertus Irnberger, together with his Czech

colleagues, achieves here some inspiring results. Benefiting from crisp, beautifully balanced sound, the players of the Prague Philharmonia, particularly the wind soloists, make the most of Dvořák's rural evocations; and in the Concerto and the *Romance*, Irnberger, by not insisting on continual dominance, allows the orchestra to make its mark.

But virtuosity is an important element in the Concerto and Irnberger carries off the opening flourishes, for instance, with nonchalant panache. And both he and Petr Altrichter are adept at keeping the music on the move, reminding us, for example, that the Concerto's second movement is *Adagio ma non troppo*, and achieving its moments of deep tranquillity without stretching the tempo. Other violinists, for example Sarah Chang in her performance with Colin Davis and the LSO in 2001, have projected the lyrical passages with greater intensity but this is a consistent and satisfying account.

The performance of the *Romance* is equally convincing, and Irnberger and Pavel Kašpar find a suitably intimate tone for the Sonatina Dvořák composed for his children. They're not tempted to play the *Larghetto* too slowly, using dynamics and tonal quality to convey its melancholy and sense of loneliness. Similarly, the sections of the finale marked *molto tranquillo* need, in their hands, only a modest slackening of tempo. And in the *Scherzo* Irnberger finds time within the brisk overall speed to give the Trio's melody a lovely singing quality.

In short, the playing throughout keeps us aware of the freshness of Dvořák's invention. **Duncan Druce**

Vn Conc – selected comparison:

Chang, LSO, C Davis (8/03) (EMI) 557521-2

Eötvös

'Concertos'

seven^a. Levitations^b. CAP-KO^c

^bRichard Hosford, ^bJohn Bradbury *cls*

^aAkiko Suwanai *vn* ^cPierre-Laurent Aimard *pf*

^bBBC Symphony Orchestra; ^{ac}Gothenburg

Symphony Orchestra / Peter Eötvös

Budapest Music Centre © BMCCD170 (63' • DDD)

Recorded live at the ^aBéla Bartók National Concert Hall, Budapest, March 30, 2008; ^bBarbican Hall, London, May 14, 2011; ^cGothenburg Concert Hall, February 2 & 3, 2013

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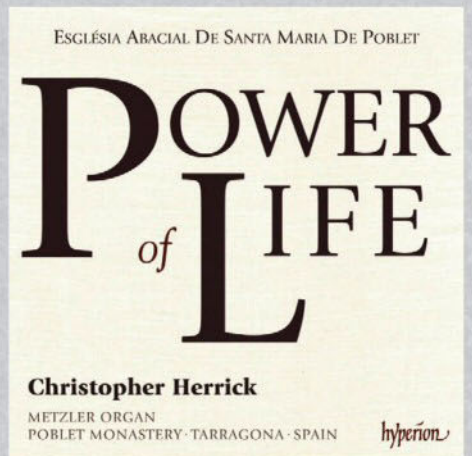
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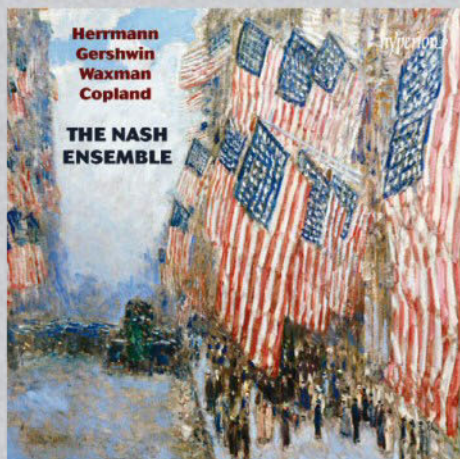
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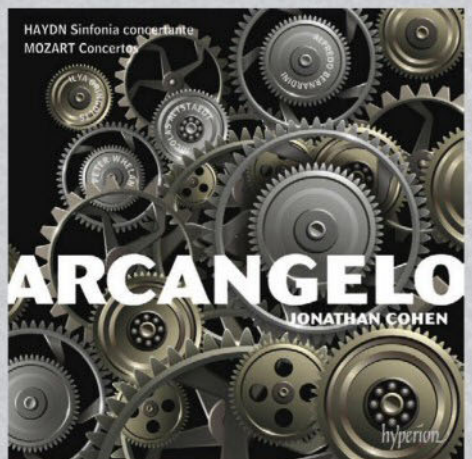
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JONATHAN COHEN conductor



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Patricia Kopatchinskaja's recording of Peter Eötvös's *seven* (2006)

made a strong impression (Recording of the Year in the 2013 Awards) in company with two earlier Hungarian violin concertos. Now the Budapest Music Centre has issued a 2008 recording by the Japanese violinist who first played the work, alongside two other Eötvös concertos from 2005 and 2007 respectively. The earliest, *CAP-KO*, is a 'concerto for acoustic piano, keyboard and orchestra'. It's dedicated to Bartók, and calling the fourth of its five movements 'Bartók crosses the ocean' suggests that Eötvös is linking it to his Bartók-acknowledging 2006 *Sonata per sei* for two pianos, three percussionists and sampler keyboard (Wergo, 8/14). Both scores offer exuberance and turbulence in abundance, offset by more reflective episodes, and Pierre-Laurent Aimard relishes the many opportunities *CAP-KO* provides for virtuoso interplay between a conventional piano and its MIDI alter ego.

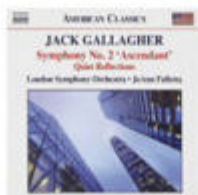
Levitation (2007) also has five sections, and its scoring for two clarinets, strings and accordion (not 'harmonica' as the translated notes state) facilitates the explicit allusion to Petrushka's sinister 'resurrection' towards the end. Though it is rather more static in rhythmic character than Stravinsky's early masterwork, the sparks begin to fly as the duetting clarinetists respond to the music's almost cinematic vividness. Nevertheless, *seven* is probably the strongest piece of the three. As a 'memorial for the Columbia astronauts', its unusual design – four short cadenzas followed by a lament-like finale almost twice as long as the collected cadenzas, comes across powerfully in this fiercely committed performance, recorded with maximum intimacy and immediacy.

Arnold Whittall

seven – comparative version:
Kopatchinskaja, Hessian RSO, Eötvös
(12/12) (NAXOS) V5285

Gallagher

Symphony No 2, 'Ascendant'. *Quiet Reflections*
London Symphony Orchestra / JoAnn Falletta
Naxos American Classics (B) 8 559768 (75' • DDD)



Born in Brooklyn in 1947, Jack Gallagher studied composition, counterpoint and

orchestration with Elie Siegmeister (1909-91). In his booklet-note he cites how Sir Eugene Goossens's 1959 Everest recording of Stravinsky's *Petrushka* with the LSO first turned him on to the sound of the symphony orchestra and also fondly recalls the experience of playing trumpet in the Orchestra of the National Orchestral Association in New York.

Gallagher's Second Symphony (2010-13) clocks in at an eyebrow-raising 63 minutes, and initially there's lots of fun to be had spotting the influences and sometimes near-cribs (I compiled a list as long as your arm – Sibelius, Stravinsky, Bartók, Hindemith, Holst, Walton, Britten, Lutosławski, Dutilleux, Barber, Piston, Del Tredici...). However, on subsequent hearings it's hard not to be won over by the prodigious energy, long-term thinking and melodic fecundity of Gallagher's exuberant inspiration, to say nothing of the breathtaking skill and swaggering confidence with which he handles his forces. Admittedly, I'm still not convinced the finale quite stacks up in the way the three preceding movements manage to but readers can decide for themselves. Composed in 1996 for the 80th anniversary of the Wooster Symphony Orchestra in Ohio, *Quiet Reflections* serves as an innocuous 12-minute postscript.

I'm happy to report that JoAnn Falletta directs with contagious dedication and encourages the LSO to give of its considerable best; indeed, these players would appear to be having a ball, with standout contributions from the flute and horn principals in particular. Phil Rowlands, too, can be proud of the splendiferously sumptuous, detailed and wide-ranging sound he has achieved within the helpful acoustic of Blackheath Concert Halls. In other words, if you like the sound of all of this, don't hesitate for a moment.

Andrew Achenbach

M Gordon

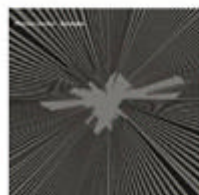
Dystopia^a. *Rewriting Beethoven's Seventh Symphony*^b

^bBamberg Symphony Orchestra / Jonathan Nott;

^aLos Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra / David Robertson

Cantaloupe (C) CA21105 (53' • DDD)

Recorded live at the ^bBeethovenfest, Bonn, September 30, 2006; ^aWalt Disney Concert Hall, Los Angeles, January 12, 2008



Best known for his work with ensembles (not least in *Bang on a Can*), Michael Gordon

is no slouch when it comes to translating his high-octane idiom into the orchestral genre. Whether or not *Dystopia* was meant to be heard in the context of a film by Bill Morrison, its use of techniques from 15th-century hocketing to 1990s 'drum and bass' results in music which, if it does not quite sustain momentum across the half-hour duration, is still impressive for its rhythmic propulsion and an accruing of incident right through to those tumultuous final bars.

After which *Rewriting Beethoven's Seventh Symphony* feels outwardly the more schematic in its evolution. In his brief though pertinent booklet-note, Gordon reflects on the decibel impact this work must have had on its early listeners; and while that could hardly be recaptured today, the American composer's taking of just one 'essential idea' from each movement is a viable means of generating cumulative velocity across and between its four movements. Interesting, too, is the way that the borrowed element is increasingly absorbed into this music: whether or not Gordon truly 'forgot about Beethoven', the outcome is a distinctly personal perspective.

Such music demands no half measures in terms of execution, and the playing of both the Los Angeles Philharmonic and the Bamberg Symphony meets the respective challenges with alacrity. Response to the latter work does sound audibly more equivocal, as if suggesting the Bamberg audience might have been nonplussed. Or maybe this was more a case of aural shell shock? **Richard Whitehouse**

Howells • Corp

Corp Cello Concerto^a *Howells Cello Concerto* (compl Clinch)^a. *Two Pieces, Op 20*

^aAlice Neary VC

Royal Scottish National Orchestra / Ronald Corp
Dutton (C) CDLX7317 (72' • DDD)



Herbert Howells made initial sketches for a cello concerto in 1933 but it was the tragic

death in 1935 of his nine-year-old son Michael that changed the nature of the work. Composition provided a means of dealing with his grief. One result was his masterpiece *Hymnus Paradisi*. Another was the Cello Concerto, though only the first movement (entitled *Fantasia*) was ever completed; the second was orchestrated by Christopher Palmer in 1992 (entitled *Threnody*). Both were recorded by Moray Welsh and Richard Hickox back in 1995 on

Chandos (3/96). The third has now been completed by Jonathan Clinch, whose booklet (and *Gramophone* blog) tells the whole fascinating story.

One has to be in the right frame of mind to listen to the Concerto. It is not, frankly, a work to put a spring in your step on a sunny summer Monday morning; rather it puts one in mind of one of Atkinson Grimshaw's rain-sodden gaslit landscapes. No wonder Howells referred to it as a private 'medical document' – the two anguished climaxes of the first movement, for instance, scream with misery. It's a powerful and heartfelt work. Alice Neary's burnished tone captures its melancholy to perfection without the least show of superfluous sentimentality.

Ronald Corp, knowing that the Howells was 'dense, heavy and relatively dark' and that his own new Cello Concerto (2014) was to sit alongside it on disc, wanted his to be 'a foil...lighter, less intense and more relaxed, even joyous'. It is indeed a work that is surely going to attract many in the future, with its haunting second movement especially appealing. Before this premiere recording come 'Puck's Minuet' and 'Merry-Eye', Howells's Two Pieces for small orchestra, as near as he got to writing 'light music'. Corp the conductor, of course, is a past master in this repertoire.

Jeremy Nicholas

Kancheli

Symphonies – No 4^a; No 5^a; No 6^a.

Mourned by the Wind^c

^cYuri Bashmet, ^bGiya Chaduneli,

^bArchil Kharadze *vs* State Symphony

Orchestra of Georgia / Jansug Kakhidze

Melodiya (M) (2) MELCD100 2286

(124' • ^{ab}ADD/^cDDD). Recorded ^a1978, ^b1981, ^c1988.

From ^aOlympia OCD403 (4/91); ^bOCD401 (9/90);

^cMelodiya 74321 49958-2 (6/98)



Giya Kancheli may not be the first name that springs to mind when charting the

development of the symphony during the 20th century but his contribution to the form is in fact very important. Ivan Moody once described Kancheli's musical voice as one of 'extraordinary originality', and the cycle of seven symphonies, composed between 1967 and 1986, does much to support this claim.

The core of the cycle, Nos 4–6, is included here on an impressive two-disc set and provides an excellent introduction to

Kancheli's mastery of the genre. The Fourth (1975) sets the tone with a single-movement design that sharply contrasts dynamic juxtapositions and extreme stylistic shifts. It is dedicated to the memory of Michelangelo, the opening peal of bells and ritualistic tone making it perhaps the most pictorial and image-based of the three, with even the simple, tonal melody heard on harp and celesta after the opening section sounding like a quote from one of the composer's film scores.

The Fifth (1977) is far more personal in scope, dedicated this time to the memory of the composer's parents. The opening child-like theme on harpsichord weaves its memorable autobiographical trace across the work's surface, before being cut off abruptly at the end. Loud, dissonant interjections are somehow more keenly experienced here, as are expressive, tender moments. The composer's trademark use of sudden changes is less apparent in the folk-like Sixth (1980), until the work's climactic final section, which must rank as one of the most memorable and dramatically scintillating moments in the entire literature of the 20th-century symphony. With Jansug Kakhidze again directing affairs from the podium, there's not much to separate the State Symphony Orchestra of Georgia's performance here with past recordings by the Georgian National Orchestra or Tbilisi Symphony Orchestra (Sony, 5/95).

The remaining work on this set, *Mourned by the Wind* (1988), mirrors the traditional design of a concerto but in other respects eschews its more conventional features. Kancheli called it a 'liturgy' for viola and orchestra, with the solo part (brilliantly realised on this recording by Yuri Bashmet) often supported by the orchestra rather than pitted against it. A more introverted element of Kancheli's musical voice is presented here, although the second movement does spark briefly into life.

Pwyll ap Siôn

Mahler

Symphony No 4. Des Knaben Wunderhorn – Das irdische Leben; Lob des hohen Verstandes; Verlorne Mühe

Lisa Larsson *sop*

Het Gelders Orkest / Antonello Manacorda

Challenge Classics (F) (CC72659

(69' • DDD/DSD • T/t)



There are numerous ways to tackle Mahler's piece of premature neo-

classicism in an age which has seen more recordings of Erwin Stein's reduced version than once competed for pride of place in the parent work as chosen here. One method is to discount the music's presentiments of 20th-century rigour and go for the softly-softly approach. Currently elusive in physical format, Lorin Maazel and the Vienna Philharmonic are famously serene (Sony, 3/85 – nla). Likewise Michael Tilson Thomas in San Francisco (SFS, 7/04). I was expecting Antonella Manacorda, a founder-member and former leader of the Mahler Chamber Orchestra, to ditch their genteel sweetness and explore the score's awkward corners, something Claudio Abbado was wont to do even when more typically disposed to otherworldly reflection. Instead Manacorda is sunny and relaxed, an impression enhanced by exceptionally lush and velvety sound engineering which puts us at some distance from the performers even when listening through the regular two channels. Though some Mahlerian grit and sparkle is sacrificed in the process, audiophiles should be entranced.

Also distinctive is the contribution of the Swedish soprano Lisa Larsson. Prominently featured in the packaging, she is in effect the star of the show, gifted three extra songs in what is her second collaboration with the accomplished Arnhem-based ensemble on Challenge Classics. Then again, does one actually want a big personality in the symphony's finale? Reacting against grande dame affectation, Leonard Bernstein experimented with the chaste timbre of a boy treble to suggest a child's-eye view of heaven. No, that didn't work, and neither does Renée Fleming's self-conscious swooning for Abbado (DG, 1/06). Larsson's attempt to convey unsophisticated innocence by way of pernickety characterisation might be thought a problem in itself but I found her basic timbre uncongenial – there's just too much vibrato. While Maazel's protagonist is ideal, the unforgettable Kathleen Battle, Iván Fischer's Miah Persson sings persuasively enough in an immaculately crafted production with a more immediate sonic imprint. The present issue, albeit well presented with notes, texts, translations, personnel listing and technical data, is not in the same league.

David Gutman

Sym No 4 – selected comparisons:

Witteck, *Concertgebouw Orch*, Bernstein (8/88) (DG)

423 607-2GH, 459 080-2GX16 or 477 5174GB6

Persson, *Budapest Fest Orch*, I Fischer

(4/09) (CHNN) CCSSA26109

Mahler

Symphony No 4

Elizabeth Watts *sop*

Netherlands Philharmonic Orchestra /

Marc Albrecht

Pentatone (F) PTC5186 487 (58' • DDD/DSD)



In a pre-concert interview around the time of this recording in June

2014, Elizabeth Watts discussed how her academic background in archaeology encouraged her to think inside the Fourth's concluding vision of heavenly life, to hear and sing it how Mahler and his audience would have heard it. The knowledge that the teenage Mahler sat beside and ministered to his dying brother Ernst was important to her, but it doesn't result in an excessively knowing or coy performance. Successively excited, rueful and at peace, she leaves extremes of colour to the orchestration around her, not placed to great advantage in the recording mix: I preferred her more forward placing and projection in the concert broadcast from the Concertgebouw.

Back in the converted church that is this orchestra's home studio, the temperature has been turned down a notch or two in a chamber-scale interpretation that belies the 14.12.10.8.6 string section, compliant and graceful except in the triangle-heavy climax of the *Poco adagio*. Albrecht follows the current practice to turn this movement into an angst-laden experience, whereas Bernstein, Klemperer and Walter in their different ways understood it as a cousin to the Fifth's *Adagietto*.

The orchestra's wind and brass soloists stand close comparison with their Concertgebouw rivals on Bernard Haitink's latest and dourest recording of the symphony: I especially enjoy Albrecht and the orchestra letting the sunshine into the *Scherzo*, and their negotiation of the first movement is classical in form and conception, both more deft and less indulgent than Antonello Manacorda (reviewed above). In its self-effacing way, the performance is true to the symphony's deceptive charm. **Peter Quantrill**

Selected comparison:

RCO, Haitink (A/07) (RCOL) RCO07003

► Elizabeth Watts writes about the soprano Gundula Janowitz in Icons on page 62

Mahler

Symphony No 9

Hallé Orchestra / Sir Mark Elder

Hallé (B) (2) CDHLD7541 (82' • DDD). Recorded live at The Bridgewater Hall, Manchester, May 22, 2014

Mahler

Symphony No 9

Budapest Festival Orchestra / Iván Fischer

Channel Classics (F) CCSSA36115 (76' • DDD/DSD)



How many Ninths do we really need? From Bruno Walter to Bruno Maderna (BBC, 8/06 – nla) and beyond, the field is jam-packed, and Sir Mark Elder is not immediately recognisable as a dyed-in-the-wool Mahlerian. That said, he has been directing the Ninth for years (and will do so again at the forthcoming BBC Proms), while his orchestra has Mahlerian roots more deeply embedded than its London rivals. If Iván Fischer's Budapest Festival Orchestra might be thought more incontrovertibly idiomatic,

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neither rendering can be dismissed as a mere run-through.

Given the Hallé's spaciousness in Elgar it is not surprising to find their live Ninth spilling over on to a second disc in physical format. Less predictable are its autumnal atmosphere and easy flow. The music-making is never merely tidy or slick but should you be looking for emotional volatility and forward momentum in the tradition of Sir John Barbirolli it is Fischer who comes closer. Elder has a cool, clear, carefully ordered take on the outer movements – Klimt rather than Schiele. His players almost always deliver the goods, even if their corporate efforts lack the virtuoso gleam of their Hungarian rivals. Only the second movement strikes me as untenably pale, partly because Fischer so keenly sets it twinkling, which of course entails some agogic touches not everyone will like. Both *Rondo-Burlesques* are accurate; however, Fischer finds greater acidity and makes more of the aspiring central section (which Sir Mark is determined not to over-sentimentalise) before racing to the finishing line with violent intent. In Manchester the concluding pages of the finale, patiently unfolded and calm rather than death-haunted, would seem to have been listened to in rapt silence.

Turn to Fischer, though, and everything snaps into focus: sceptics might even claim that it's as if Mahler's black-and-white classic had been colourised. Details are consistently cleaner and brighter, microphones closer. The conductor is at his most bracingly taut in the opening movement, strait-laced at first but soon plunging us into the maelstrom. Discerning little of Elder's otherworldly detachment, Fischer gives us the edginess of Bernstein without his tendency to wallow. Indeed, all four movements receive interpretations in which briskness risks turning into brusqueness yet which convince on their own terms. Thanks to the band's exalted technical standards, localised effects can be etched in without strain even at speed and it's the small things that so often strike sparks – exposed timpani properly tuned, problematic textures rendered with airy chamber-like luminosity.

A word on the recordings. I needed a higher volume setting to help focus the Hallé's acoustically top-notch Bridgewater Hall, where the first and second violins are placed antiphonally with double basses lined up at the rear and concluding applause expunged. Aficionados will not be disappointed. Still, the Channel Classics issue (with surround-sound option) is in a very special class, a sonic dazzler, quite apart from its bold musical qualities. A potential Award-winner! **David Gutman**

Selected comparisons:

BPO, Barbirolli (9/64th) (EMI) 678292-2

BPO, Bernstein (5/92nd) (DG) 477 8620GOR

VPO, Walter (A/02) (DUTT) CDBP9708 or (NAXO) 8 110852

► Iván Fischer discusses Mahler's Ninth Symphony in *The Musician and the Score* on page 44

Martinů

Rhapsody-Concerto, H337^a. Three Madrigals (Duo No 1), H313^b. Duo No 2, H331^b.

Viola Sonata, H355^c

Maxim Rysanov *va*

^bAlexander Sitkovetsky *vn* ^cKatya Apekisheva *pf*

^aBBC Symphony Orchestra / Jiří Bělohlávek

BIS (F) BIS2030 (68' • DDD/DSD)



The viola player Maxim Rysanov is the star attraction in this collection of music

from Martinů's last years, during which he was on the move more than once from the United States to Europe. In 1952 he was commissioned by the Principal Viola of Szell's Cleveland Orchestra to write a *Rhapsody-Concerto* in two movements, a form he favoured, and one that liberated him from more conventional structures towards 'fantasy', to coin his own word.

Within all four works there's often a note of poignant nostalgia as the composer casts a backwards look to his Bohemian roots. The *Rhapsody-Concerto* opens in such a vein, with a lyrical string theme that returns in various guises. Rysanov plays it with great expression and there's a spring in his step in the succeeding dance-like episodes. The slow movement follows a similar pattern, its difficulties tossed off by the soloist, the conclusion with viola against side drum a fond farewell. The BBC SO under Bělohlávek sound well in the Barbican acoustic.

The remainder of the programme was recorded at Pottton Hall. *Three Madrigals* finds Rysanov and violinist Alexander Sitkovetsky equal partners in this inventive and engaging work. Rustic Bohemian sounds dominate the lyrical first movement of the Duo No 2, complementing the introspective slow movement before spirits are lifted in a dashing finale. The Viola Sonata, with Katya Apekisheva in strong support, is the most discursive of the pieces here but she and Rysanov have the measure of it. That distinctive measured dance tune at 1'44" which returns as the first movement's coda is pure magic in their hands. A Martinů CD to play again and again. **Adrian Edwards**

Mendelssohn • Chopin

Chopin Piano Concerto No 1, Op 11

(orch Balakirev)^a Mendelssohn Die Heimkehr aus der Fremde – Overture. Piano Concerto in E minor (compl Yates)^a

^aVictor Sangiorgio *pf*

Royal Northern Sinfonia / Martin Yates

Dutton Epoch (F) CDLX7312 (75' • DDD/DSD)



Mendelssohn's early one-act comic opera *Die Heimkehr aus der Fremde* (usually

translated as 'Son and Stranger') had, I thought, entirely escaped me until I realised it is from where that dreadful old bass patter-song 'I am a roamer' comes (Malcolm McEachern and Peter Dawson were among those who recorded it in the 1920s). Perhaps it's funnier in German. This 'Liederspiel', written to celebrate the 25th wedding anniversary of Mendelssohn's parents, was confined to a single private performance in 1829. Like Saint-Saëns and his *Carnival*, Mendelssohn banned publication of the work. It only saw the light of day in 1851 after his death. The Overture is unmistakably Mendelssohn: the orchestration and even certain figures inhabit the same fairy-tale world as the *Midsummer Night's Dream* Overture and it is, *ipso facto*, quite delightful.

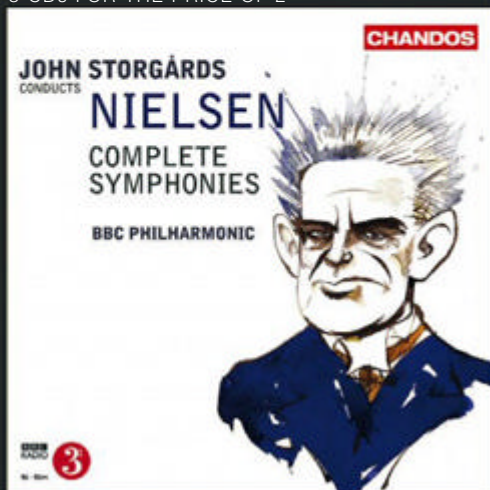
The E minor Piano Concerto (Mendelssohn's so-called third but in fact his fifth) was left unfinished. Various scholars have produced three-movement completions despite there being sketches for only the first two. R Larry Todd's version used a transcription of the finale of the Violin Concerto for the last movement; Marcello Bufalini's 2006 completion was recorded by Oleg Marshev (Danacord, A/14) and has a completely different third movement to the present one made by Martin Yates in 2013. Both are expertly and convincingly realised (even if Yates's Mendelssohn seems occasionally to have a prescient acquaintance with Offenbach and Saint-Saëns) but the work can only really be described as a concerto in the style of Mendelssohn.

Rounding off this enchanting disc is Balakirev's reorchestration of Chopin's E minor Piano Concerto. This is, as Roderick Swanson's booklet puts it, 'a respectful revisit [representing] the changes in sound and aesthetics between Chopin in the 1830s and Balakirev in 1910'. Victor Sangiorgio's playing of this is fine but unremarkable, and not to be compared with the singing tone, poetry and inexorable impetus of Friedrich Gulda

CHANDOS

New Releases

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Disc of the Month Nielsen: Complete Symphonies

BBC Philharmonic / John Storgårds

John Storgårds and the BBC Philharmonic here present a complete three-CD set of Nielsen's symphonies. With the successful release a year ago of Sibelius's complete symphonies, they celebrate together the 150th anniversary of the birth of both composers. Several concerts devoted to Nielsen's symphonies, played by the same forces, coincide with this release: on BBC 3 in February, at the Nielsen and Sibelius festival in Stockholm in April, during a week of celebrations at the Bridgewater Hall in June, etc.

CHAN 10859(3)



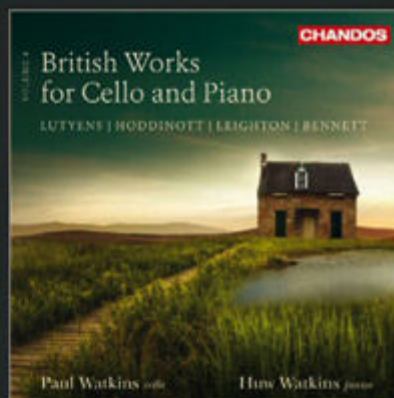
Atterberg

Orchestral Works, Vol. 3

Gothenburg Symphony
Orchestra / Neeme Järvi

Atterberg's tuneful, accessible, and fairly folkloristic music will be in the spotlight this summer, given the celebrations surrounding the Nordic composers Nielsen and Sibelius. This third volume features Symphony No. 1 and the revised version of Symphony No. 5, rarely performed or recorded.

CHSA 5154



British Works for Cello and Piano

Vol. 4

'By far the best recorded guide to this powerful and enjoyable repertoire' (*BBC Music*), the Watkins brothers continue this exploration of what became very rich and popular repertoire in British musical life of the late twentieth century, with works by Leighton, Bennett, Hoddinott and Lutyens, overlooked musical gems.

CHAN 10862



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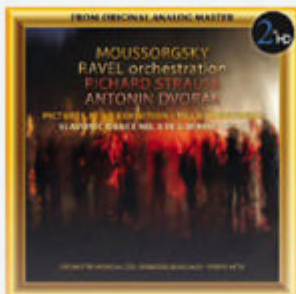
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in his 1953 recording for Decca with the LPO and Boult. **Jeremy Nicholas**

Chopin/Balakirev – selected comparison:

Gulda, LPO, Boult (6/10) (DG) 477 8742GH2

Mozart

Piano Concertos – No 15, K450; No 16, K451. Rondo, K382

Ronald Brautigam *fp*

Cologne Academy / Michael Alexander Willens

BIS (F) (S) BIS2064 (54' • DDD/DSD)



A pianist of prodigious technique, a musician of unpredictable temperament: such

is the dichotomy of Ronald Brautigam. And it isn't simply a question of interpretation, as in the first movement of K450. If you are used to a yielding approach exemplified by Andrés Schiff and Sándor Végh, or a mildly stricter view from Malcolm Bilson and John Eliot Gardiner, the tense drive of Brautigam with the co-operation of Michael Alexander Willens could be disconcerting.

But it is justified as another light shed on this movement. Reach the *Andante*, however, and a sudden about-face of prosaic, indifferent playing with no graduated shading of tone is hard to take – the more so as Willens provides a contrastingly sensitive partnership. The final *Allegro* is no better, an example of mere note-spinning, and one spun too fast for the rhythm of compound time to speak.

Inconsistency recurs. In a kaleidoscopic change of attitude, Brautigam springs the surprise of a powerful, dramatic opening *Allegro assai* to K451, his playing expressively histrionic but far from hard-edged; and Willens is superbly responsive to the pomp and grandeur inherent in the orchestration, resplendently recorded too. Just as abruptly, Brautigam then switches to a matter-of-fact, somewhat brusque *Andante*, yet recovers to a degree in the finale. Not enough though; and his often cavalier view of K382 is a puzzle as well. If this is all too much, look to the comparisons below: no jolting rides, just unswervingly excellent performances.

Nalen Anthoni

K450 – selected comparisons:

Bilson, EBS, Gardiner (5/85th) (ARCH) 463 111-2AB9

Schiff, Camerata Academica Salzburg, Vegh

(10/92th) (DECC) 448 140-2DM9

K451 – selected comparison:

Knauer, Salzburg Camerata, Norrington

(6/05) (WARN) 2564 61944-2

K451, K382 – selected comparison:

Levin, AAM, Hogwood (2/00) (DECC) 458 285-2OH

Müthel

The Five Keyboard Concertos

Arte dei Suonatori / Marcin Świątkiewicz *hpd*

BIS (F) (S) BIS2179 (127' • DDD)



'Who was Johann Gottfried Müthel?' asks the booklet-note, with good reason. For

some his name might strike a faint bell as one of JS Bach's last pupils. He later met CPE Bach in Berlin, and corresponded regularly with him after he became Kapellmeister in Riga. Müthel's many admirers included the English music historian Charles Burney, who in 1773 wrote that his compositions 'are so full of novelty, taste, grace and contrivance, that I should not hesitate to rank them among the greatest productions of the age'. While my own rapture was slightly more modified, his five harpsichord concertos (he composed almost exclusively for the keyboard) reveal yet another 18th-century composer who deserves to be rescued from posthumous oblivion.

Born in 1728, Müthel was of the generation of Haydn and Johann Christian Bach. One or two movements, above all the pastoral, siciliano-style *Adagio* of No 2 in D minor, charmingly coloured by a pair of bassoons, might be mistaken for Johann Christian. More often, though, Müthel seems to take his friend CPE as his model: say, in the musically ornamental, *empfindsam* *Adagios*, the cussedly angular first movement of No 1 and the high-voltage finales of Nos 2 and 6. More than CPE, Müthel highlights virtuoso brilliance, throwing in dizzying swirls of semiquavers and demisemiquavers, mini-fantasias and cadenzas – testimony to his own keyboard prowess.

No one could claim Müthel as a great tunesmith. With rare exceptions, gesture rather than singing melody is the order of the day. Some of his quasi-improvisatory writing, especially in first movements, can be meandering and repetitive – something you rarely find in CPE. Yet this is ear-tickling music, sometimes rather more than that. In her informative note, Regina Rapp suggests that Müthel's concertos 'live or die by the subtlety with which they are performed'. Well, they certainly live here. Playing on a fine, sonorous copy of a 17th-century Ruckers harpsichord, Marcin Świątkiewicz relishes both the flamboyant virtuosity of the fast movements and the delicate sentiment of the *Adagios* – not so delicate, either, in the florid, Baroque-inspired rhetoric of No 4. He makes

colourful use of the instrument's contrasting manuals and has a subtle sense of *rubato*, aware that time borrowed should also be repaid. Świątkiewicz's eloquent advocacy is matched by the 10-strong strings of Arte dei Suonatori, spruce and rhythmically buoyant, mitigating the 'chug' factor in Müthel's repeated-bass accompaniments. The recorded sound is ideally warm and lively. Recommended to anyone who enjoys CPE Bach's concertos and wants to venture into one of the century's agreeable forgotten byways.

Richard Wigmore

Nielsen

Symphonies – No 2, 'The Four Temperaments', Op 16; No 6, 'Sinfonia semplice'

Royal Stockholm Philharmonic Orchestra /

Sakari Oramo

BIS (F) (S) BIS2128 (65' • DDD/DSD)



Sakari Oramo's cycle of Nielsen symphonies roars to its conclusion with an account of the

Second, *The Four Temperaments*, irresistibly driven by a fifth – Oramo himself. The choleric hero positively steams into our midst – a Berliozian pirate whose ferocious energy is tamed only by the impassioned lyricism of his more romantic inclinations, namely the second subject.

The sheer zestiness of the outer movements is thoroughly infectious, with Oramo plainly revelling in the rhythmic imperative of this music and his orchestra, the Stockholm Philharmonic, always right on the tip of his baton. If there is an inhibiting element for us the listeners it is the liveliness of the Stockholm Concert Hall, which slightly compromises clarity in the rowdiest *tutti*s (I raised this in a previous release) – though I admit I want immediacy first and foremost from a recording and the keenest edges are not compatible with a generous hall sound. A terrific performance of a marvellous symphony, though, with the delicious easy-going undulations of the phlegmatic fellow really singing here and the melancholic reaches of the slow movement achieving an almost Brucknerian grandiosity.

Nielsen's last symphony – anything but 'semplice' – is also finely tuned and disturbingly precise, and probably fares better in this soundscape on account of its leaner, meaner scoring. The nursery humour of his 'second childhood' has strong parallels with Shostakovich's last symphony, though it is doubtful that the Russian ever heard his Danish

counterpart's final symphonic musings. The idea of innocence brutally corrupted is common to both, though, even if Nielsen is more explicit about it in the hyperventilating climax of the first movement, which is unceremoniously hijacked by a brass section every bit as disruptive and pernicious as the renegade side drum in the Fifth Symphony. Then there is the 'throwing all the toys out of the pram' moment in the second movement, 'Humoreske', where the trombone's *glissandos* smell worse than you could possibly imagine. But the gravity of the slow movement is matched only by its desolation and I guess the real difference between Shostakovich and Nielsen would be the latter's anarchic sense of fun: the way he subverts the 'variation' option in the last movement and, of course, that two-finger salute to Death from two mightily rude bassoons in the pay-off.

Edward Seckerson

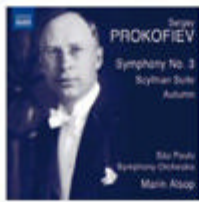
Prokofiev

Symphony No 3, Op 44.

Scythian Suite, Op 20. Autumn, Op 8

São Paulo Symphony Orchestra / Marin Alsop

Naxos © 8 573452 (61' • DDD)



Prokofiev, who never liked playing second fiddle to anyone, must have been piqued by

Shostakovich's Soviet celebrity. But could the great Shostakovich boom be over? With three significant Prokofiev symphony cycles under way it looks as if some judicious rebalancing is taking place. That said, even die-hard fans will admit that Prokofiev's seven works in the form aren't always magnificent and Marin Alsop's elegant lucidity provides only a partial solution to the problem in this fourth release in her series. She gets unfailingly good string-playing, often more sensitively nuanced than that of her rivals, but her São Paulo team does tend to 'normalise' the invention, smoothing away rough edges in a manner not everyone will find idiomatic.

Typically generous in its provision of makeweights and warmly recorded (I've not heard the audiophile Blu-ray version), the new disc kicks off with a *Scythian Suite* offering keen rhythmic definition and considerable depth of feeling. For ultimate interpretative heft and passion I would turn to Claudio Abbado and the Simón Bolívar Symphony Orchestra; the conductor strains every last sinew and it helps that the band is so much larger. Still, Alsop's reading works on its own terms, and if she makes the

music sound as much like Roussel as Stravinsky one can perhaps discern why Serge Diaghilev chose to reject this would-be ballet score as insufficiently Russian.

The Third Symphony, stitched together patchwork-style from Prokofiev's then unstaged opera *The Fiery Angel*, can't perhaps be expected to convince as a conventional symphonic entity. Naxos has been here before with Theodore Kuchar's ill-kempt Ukrainian forces and anyone brought up on them will be used to a much edgier, sadomasochistic kind of effect. Alsop provides less revelatory detail than Kirill Karabits, working with what was once 'her' Bournemouth orchestra yet, in further downplaying the sense of hysterical possession associated with the opera, she makes the Third seem unusually coherent. It's good to have Prokofiev's autumnal add-on, here rendered raptly nostalgic (those mainly Russian-trained strings again). And the price is right. **David Gutman**

Sym No 3 – selected comparisons:

Ukraine Nat SO, Kuchar (10/95) (NAXO) 8 553054

Bournemouth SO, Karabits (6/14) (ONYX) ONYX4137

Scythian Ste – selected comparison:

Simón Bolívar SO, Abbado

(ACCE) DVD ACC20101; ACC10204

Prokofiev

Symphony No 5, Op 100. Scythian Suite, Op 20

Bergen Philharmonic Orchestra / Andrew Litton

BIS © BIS2124 (67' • DDD/DSD)



Andrew Litton began his Prokofiev symphony cycle with a successful reading of

the profound yet problematic Sixth (6/13). The Fifth presents fewer difficulties save perhaps in the second movement, when the main *scherzo* idea skulks in at a slower tempo before accelerating up to speed, and at the very end of the symphony where Prokofiev suddenly reduces the dynamic level as if to confront us with the compromised quality of the rejoicing. Some august ensembles have been found wanting in these awkward corners. Litton favours a relatively abrupt transition in the first instance and he keeps a tight grip on the fretful bustle at the close, helped by his incisive, un-gabbed treatment of the finale as a whole.

Litton is not usually a conductor prone to interpretative extremes and apart from some oddly articulated braking, momentarily intrusive in the opening movement, there is little to criticise and much to admire. Hereabouts we are conceptually closer to Karajan than speed

merchants such as Jansons or Gergiev, not that anyone else is quite so seamlessly monolithic. The Bergen orchestra's brittle winds and relatively gritless sonority may disappoint those who consider a darker, thicker kind of sound *de rigueur* in this music but you get to hear *piano* lines usually buried and well-defined percussion. With bright (over-bright?) state-of-the-art sound engineering the effect is almost disconcertingly crystalline. The *Adagio* slow movement is especially luminous, fading out with tender regret.

There have been earthier recordings of the *Scythian Suite* but none airier or more teeming with detail. Audiophiles will almost certainly find this more satisfying than Marin Alsop's new recording (reviewed above), but then it does come at premium price. The booklet-notes are sensibly balanced (Andrew Huth) and one of Kazimir Malevich's most memorable images informs the artwork. **David Gutman**

Sym No 5 – selected comparisons:

Leningrad PO, Jansons (5/88) (CHAN) CHAN8576

BPO, Karajan (1/93) (DG) 437 253-2GGA or

(12/00) 463 613-2GOR

LSO, Gergiev (6/06) (PHIL) 475 7655PM4

Raskatov · Stravinsky

Raskatov Piano Concerto. 'Night Butterflies'^a

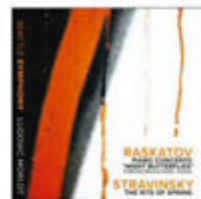
Stravinsky The Rite of Spring

^aTomoko Mukaiyama pf

Seattle Symphony Orchestra / Ludovic Morlot

Seattle Symphony Media © SSM1005 (63' • DDD)

Recorded live at Benaroya Hall, Seattle, June 2014



Alexander Raskatov is probably best known for his opera based on

Bulgakov's Gogol-like tale *The Heart of a Dog*, which reached the London Coliseum in 2010 and was praised for its staging while reservations remained about the enduring quality of the music. As the piano concerto *Night Butterflies* confirms, Raskatov is an inventive composer of the brief idea. In less than half an hour, he finds room for 12 movements, taking their inspiration from the denizens of a butterfly greenhouse. There are movements suggesting the swift flutter of wings, their lazier stirring, half-glimpsed colours, ghostly shades, elusive hoverings and, in the finale, a Russian song crooned by the soloist (the versatile and virtuoso Tomoko Mukaiyama) that tethers the whole nocturnal scene to a memory of Raskatov's lost Russian youth.

The orchestra respond nimbly to these fleeting inventions but are of course put to the test more by the demands of *The Rite of*



'A feisty, fully engaged player who generates real excitement': Leticia Moreno, whose new DG disc features Shostakovich recorded in St Petersburg

Spring. Ludovic Morlot directs a vividly coloured performance, so much so that the opening 'Adoration of the earth' sounds almost more like Ravel than Stravinsky, whose barbaric celebration is, for all the orchestral virtuosity, somewhat tamed in a tendency to beautify it all. Such crude effects as the muted trombones for the Ancestors sound almost polished, and some of the speeds suggest a quest after excitement for its own sake. But the playing is undeniably brilliant, and expertly controlled by Morlot in delivering what will always remain an orchestral *tour de force*. **John Warrack**

Shostakovich

Violin Concerto No 1, Op 77^a. Preludes, Op 34^a^b
Leticia Moreno *vn* ^b**Lauma Skride** *pf* ^a**St Petersburg Philharmonic Orchestra** / **Yuri Temirkanov**
 DG © 481 1338 (65' • DDD)

^aRecorded live in the Grand Hall of the St Petersburg Philharmonic Academy



After the sensibly national programming of her first disc for Universal's Madrid-based arm, a collection entitled 'Spanish

Landscapes', Leticia Moreno may have been over-hasty in sanctioning the release of this live St Petersburg collaboration with Yuri Temirkanov and the local Philharmonic. Mstislav Rostropovich was apparently a teacher and mentor, so she certainly has the connections.

Partly because we've grown used to concert recordings which are extensively doctored in post-production, this one sounds all too real. The noises off are actually less distracting than the soloist's technical problems. She is a feisty, fully engaged player who generates real excitement as the performance proceeds but a palpably nervous start brings serious lapses in intonation, while the close miking necessary to bolster her rather fragile, quavery tone renders audible every intake of breath. The finale is nothing if not challengingly quick.

The studio-made coupling with pianist Lauma Skride is more polished (though still breathy) and the performers' essentially lyrical approach makes a plausible alternative to the larger-than-life projection of Benjamin Schmid with Lisa Smirnova (Ondine, 5/15). The present selection is also more generous, including all but one of the 19 arrangements by Dmitri Tsyganov plus a transcription by

Lera Auerbach. That said, the main work is wholly uncompetitive unless you happen to be following Miss Moreno's career. The booklet, in Spanish, Russian and (not always idiomatic) English, includes an informal interview with all three named artists. And there are plentiful images of a soloist credited by *Le Figaro* with 'the smouldering gaze of one of Almodóvar's heroines'. **David Gutman**

Sibelius • Wagner

Sibelius Symphony No 2, Op 43^a

Wagner Tannhäuser – Overture^b

Boston Symphony Orchestra / **Andris Nelsons**

BSO Classics © BSO1401 (61' • DDD)

Recorded live at Symphony Hall, Boston,

^bSeptember 27, ^aNovember 6-11, 2014



To launch his inaugural concert as the Boston Symphony Orchestra's Music Director, Andris Nelsons chose the Overture to Wagner's *Tannhäuser*, an opera he first encountered as a five-year-old and an indelible experience which made him want to be a conductor. Nelsons directs with his customary zest and watchful

sensitivity, while securing uncommonly articulate results from his dedicated band.

It certainly makes for a tasty starter before the main course of Sibelius's Second Symphony, here given a performance of thrilling accomplishment, exploratory zeal and genuine stature under the scrupulously attentive baton of the dynamic young Latvian. His is a memorably alive and intrepidly characterful conception of entrancing sweep, elasticity and grip that hits indisputable heights in the bardic second movement and exultant finale, the latter sounding as refreshingly unhackneyed and confident in its stride as I can ever recall, and whose closing pages positively blaze with fervour and nobility (magnificent brass). My goodness, but it really does warm the cockles to hear this great orchestra firing on all cylinders in repertoire in which it enjoys such a doughty tradition. Nelsons's own preface in the booklet rightly mentions the BSO's famous recordings of this very symphony under both Serge Koussevitzky and Sir Colin Davis; his consistently judicious and nourishing account is worthy to join their company.

The commendably quiet Boston audience responds with justifiable enthusiasm, and Shawn Murphy's production captures everything with plenty of body, clarity and presence. I'm already itching to hear a lot more on disc from this exciting new partnership. **Andrew Achenbach**

Suchoň

Metamorphoses. Balladic Suite, Op 9.

Symfonieta rustica

Estonian National Symphony Orchestra /

Neeme Järvi

Chandos ̢ CHAN10849 (64' • DDD)



Eugen Suchoň's early *Balladic Suite* (1935) here receives its third recording that I can trace, curiously as it is the weakest of the three scores gathered so attractively here. 'Powerfully atmospheric and moving though it is – and excellently composed', according to Deryck Cooke's assessment of it back in 1961 (with which I concur), Suchoň still lay in Novák's shadow, and his best works were yet to come.

The two couplings are two of 'his best', dating from the 1950s and revealing him in full maturity, not least in his enchanting command of orchestration. This is heard to maximum advantage in the opening (and longest) work, *Metamorphoses* (1953), a vibrant orchestral concerto vividly scored, leaping off the page the way its ponderous

subtitle ('Variations on Original Themes in the Form of a Suite for Orchestra') does not. Suchoň's Slovak heritage is attractively displayed in five movements of increasing power and complexity. Järvi's account with the superlative Estonian National Symphony Orchestra fair fizzles with excitement, outpacing Košler's older Slovak rival (which, by the by, still sounds very well) by almost five minutes; the Estonians are fleetier and more sure-fingered than either rival orchestra in the *Balladic Suite*, too.

While Suchoň's harmonic idiom was subtly radical, based on extended tonality, he was at heart a traditionalist, as can be heard in the *Symfonieta rustica* (1955-56), an at times impressionistic expansion of a piano sonatina. Suchoň's modal writing is sometimes fleetingly reminiscent of the English pastoralists, even Vaughan Williams, and this brief, pithy *Symfonieta* will appeal to all lovers of 20th-century British music as much as to Slovakophiles. Superb sound and performances throughout make this the reference recording for Suchoň outside the operas and the perfect introduction to his art.

Recommended. **Guy Rickards**

Metamorphoses, Balladic Suite – selected comparison:

Slovak PO, Košler (MARC) 8 223130

Balladic Suite – selected comparison:

Czech PO, Jiráček (3/61*) (NAXO) ̢ 9 80917

Tchaikovsky

Manfred, Op 58. Marche slave, Op 31

City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra /

Andris Nelsons

Orfeo ̢ C895 151A (68' • DDD)

Recorded live, September 2013



Spliced together from a couple of critically acclaimed concerts towards the end of

September 2013, this latest helping of Tchaikovsky from Andris Nelsons and the CBSO certainly packs a punch. Indeed, it's some measure of the stellar results that Nelsons has been achieving in Birmingham over the past few years that I approached this new *Manfred* with the keenest anticipation. Like Mikhail Pletnev on his illuminating Pentatone remake, he takes a imposingly spacious view of Tchaikovsky's tempestuous symphonic portrait, but such is his no-holds-barred conviction, sparky temperament and exhilarating mastery of line and texture that the 58 minutes fairly fly by. For evidence of a classy orchestral alliance operating at maximum throttle witness the molten string tone and

snapping intensity of the brass in the glowering first-movement coda beginning at 14'45"; and in the riotous revelry that launches the finale, what a high-kicking cossack dance these players serve up from fig F or 2'10" (a pity, though, about those dodgy additional trumpets a little later on at 2'36"). No quibbles, either, with the satisfying heft of the organ in the work's apotheosis; the closing measures, too, convey a gentle pathos that is very moving.

Ultimately, I still think Pletnev and his astonishing Russian National Orchestra just have the edge in terms of home-grown empathy, unswerving concentration and (in the *Scherzo* especially) miraculous composure; their two fascinatingly different interpretations on DG and Pentatone really do complement each other beautifully. Nonetheless, Nelsons's broodingly passionate and imaginatively conceived reading remains a must-hear by any standards. Give or take the odd (very isolated) bump and page-turn, not to mention the conductor's sometimes audible intakes of breath, producer Tim Oldham has preserved the combustible charge of what was clearly quite an event. *Marche slave* comprises a giddily rousing curtain-raiser – and fingers crossed for the first three Tchaikovsky symphonies from these same artists! **Andrew Achenbach**

Manfred – selected comparisons:

Russian Nat Orch, Pletnev (12/94) (DG) 439 891-2GH

Russian Nat Orch, Pletnev (7/14) (PENT) PTC5186 387

Vivaldi

The Four Seasons^a. Cessate, omai cessate,

RV684^b. Farnace – Gelido in ogni vena^b

La Voce Strumentale /

Dmitry Sinkovsky^b counter/ten^{a/vn}

Naïve ̢ OP30559 (61' • DDD • T/t)



It's not unusual for vocalists to possess a certain instrumental facility and vice

versa, or to be proficient on more than one instrument; it's part of an all-round musical education. One would, however, have to travel very far indeed to find another musician as outrageously gifted as the Russian violinist and countertenor Dmitry Sinkovsky.

Now, before you exclaim, 'Oh no, not another recording of *The Four Seasons*!' let me reassure you, dear reader: this is something very different, and quite possibly one of the most brilliantly and imaginatively conceived and executed interpretations of this old warhorse to date. Why? First, Sinkovsky the violinist thinks like Sinkovsky the singer, and so every

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Dmitry Sinkovsky with his period-instrument band La Voce Strumentale: their new Vivaldi disc on Naïve features him as both violinist and countertenor

phrase, every embellishment – the ornamentation is lavish, profuse and largely improvised – every change in colour, tempo (warning: strap your seatbelts on!) or volume is guided by the words of Vivaldi's accompanying sonnets. The result is both electrifying and profound. Secondly, Sinkovsky's own period-instrument band La Voce Strumentale boasts a very small string section, just seven players if you include the double bass, which allows not only lightning responses to Sinkovsky's every gesture but a highly dramatic effect when the two harpsichords, harp and archlute are all brought into play at once.

The two vocal works included here are likewise characterised by a dramatic flair that is matched only by Sinkovsky's flawless vocal technique, his *mezza voce* in particular a marvel in itself, and one is immediately reminded of the countertenor Philippe Jaroussky, who also so convincingly combines singing and conducting his own Ensemble Artaserse. **William Yeoman**

Wieniawski

Fantaisie brillante on Gounod's Faust, Op 20.
Polonaise de concert, Op 4. Violin Concerto No 2, Op 22

Anna Maria Staśkiewicz *vn* **Henryk Wieniawski**
Lublin Philharmonic Orchestra / Piotr Wiatkowski
Dux © DUX0797A (48' • DDD)



Were you hearing these three works for the first time you might be well satisfied, but they offer no competition to their benchmark recordings. Anna Maria Staśkiewicz produces a seductively mellow tone throughout the range, with secure intonation and transparent musicality; but, without verve and a degree of showmanship, one gets only half the picture.

The violin's first entry in the Op 4 Polonaise, one of Wieniawski's most enduringly popular works, is played with all the vigour of a small, under-nourished child. Aaron Rosand with Louis de Froment is far more convincing, tossing off the final pages' cruel harmonic leaps with virile ease. Towards the end of the *Faust* Fantasy, Wieniawski gives us a delightful treatment of the famous waltz theme. Vadim Brodsky with Antoni Wit nonchalantly dispatch this with a smile; Staśkiewicz is painfully cautious and laboured.

In the D minor Concerto, competition is fiercer and while, admittedly, most violinists pale in comparison with Jascha

Heifetz, there is a country mile between Staśkiewicz and him. He and Izler Solomon might play the opening and closing first-movement *tuttis* with swingeing cuts on their 1954 recording – beneficial to my mind – but Heifetz's long paragraphs, burning intensity, assertiveness and total command of every obstacle Wieniawski throws at him linger long in the memory. Even if the woodwind soloists are not given their due prominence, Solomon provides alert support (listen to the crisp string *pizzicatos* in the finale).

Wieniawski was born in Lublin (that city's fine orchestra plays with a deal more zeal than the soloist throughout), a fact that explains but doesn't excuse 20 of the 31 pages of the Polish/English booklet being a tourist guide to Lublin. Of Wieniawski and his music there is not a single solitary word.

Jeremy Nicholas

Polonaise – selected comparison:

Rosand, Luxembourg Rad Orch, Froment

(4/79^R) (VOX) CDX5102

Faust Fantasy – selected comparison:

Brodsky, Polish RSO, Wit

(ARTS) 47313-2

Vn Conc No 2 – selected comparison:

Heifetz, RCA Victor SO, Solomon (6/56^R, 11/92^R)

(NAXO) 8 111363; (DOCU) 290511

Zemlinsky

Die Seejungfrau. Sinfonietta, Op 23

Helsinki Philharmonic Orchestra / John Storgårds

Online ⓘ ODE1237-5 (69' • DDD/DSD)



Ondine's analytically transparent recording and John Storgårds's measured approach

bring the opulent textures of *Die Seejungfrau* closer to the Expressionist sound world of the companion piece at its premiere in January 1905, Schoenberg's *Pelleas und Melisande*, than previous recordings with more tonally luxuriant ensembles from central Europe. Even the Czech Philharmonic under Zemlinsky's modern champion, Antony Beaumont, sound relatively diffuse – and who can blame them, when Zemlinsky's orchestration makes *Gurrelieder* look positively restrained? – by the side of the Helsinki Philharmonic and its discreetly recessed string and brass sections.

However, the main interest for Zemlinsky enthusiasts will lie in the central movement, where Beaumont has discovered 14 pages of music, headed 'In the realm of the Mer-Witch' and suppressed by the composer. This hitherto unheard four-minute passage (starting at 7'30") is full of slow but 'spooky' *scherzo* writing. It may do little to challenge accusations that *Die Seejungfrau* is quite garrulous and melodically undistinguished as it stands but one may as well have 47 minutes of late-Romantic wallow as 43, so here it is.

The novelty of the companion Sinfonietta is more compelling: in Roland Freisitzer's reduced scoring the piece finds a natural place in the company of contemporary chamber symphonies by Schoenberg, Schreker and Weill, a point that Storgårds could have made more strongly by taking the option of solo strings. The knowing liveliness of its harmony – almost three decades after *Die Seejungfrau* – the second movement's uneasy oscillation and the finale's neo-classical counterpoint are all the more piquant when not cloaked in full-orchestral garb. A glance at his chosen operatic subjects will show that Zemlinsky was only too ready to make music out of life's bitter ironies, and the Sinfonietta finally sounds of its time (1933) in this jazz-age arrangement. **Peter Quantrill**

Seejungfrau – selected comparison:

Czech PO, Beaumont (2/04) (CHAN)

CHAN 10138 or CHSA5022

Romain Leleu

Beffa Trumpet Concerto Delerue Concertino

Jolivet Concertino^a Matalon Traume XII

Robin Le chant de l'âme

Romain Leleu *tp*^a Laetitia Bougnol *pf*

Orchestre d'Auvergne / Roberto Forés Veses

Aparté ⓘ AP103 (59' • DDD)



On this disc Romain Leleu and the Orchestre d'Auvergne present

trumpet concertos from the second half of the 20th century together with even more recent compositions. They are marvellously played, with Leleu showing that he has the bravura of a flautist but can be remarkably stylish too.

He is kept busy, for in all but one of these concertos the soloist hardly ever stops. Perhaps the best place to start is with Jolivet's flamboyant single-movement Concertino of 10 minutes, in which he plays with dizzy bravura and idiomatic feeling. The pianist, Laetitia Bougnol, has not a great deal to do but does it well in tandem with her partner. In the other Concertino, by Georges Delerue, the trumpeter jumps about rhythmically but the work has a musing slow movement and a roving cadenza. Karol Beffa's Concerto opens introspectively and sombrely 'in modal simplicity' and soon the trumpet is lost in the orchestra. The agitated central movement is anxiously violent but mysterious serenity returns in the finale.

Jean-Baptiste Robin's *Le chant de l'âme* ('The Song of the Soul'), is short, starkly ruminative and not in the least optimistic, while Martin Matalon's *Traume XII* (which closes the programme) opens lugubriously, then weirdly high, gossamer scraping strings lead to the entry of the bright, virtuoso trumpet cadenza (superbly played) which ends the concert enigmatically. The recording is excellent and there is good (and necessary) documentation. **Ivan March**

'British Classics'

Grainger Lincolnshire Posy

Holst Two Suites, Op 28 Langford Rhapsody^a

Tomlinson Suite of English Folk Dances

Vaughan Williams English Folk Song Suite

^aSAC Jonathan Hill *tbn*

The Central Band of the Royal Air Force /

Wing Commander Duncan Stubbs

Chandos ⓘ CHAN10847 (77' • DDD)



It was my good fortune that the junior school I attended made a speciality of performing English folk dances, which has helped to make this disc of British dances

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a special delight for me, reminding me of such favourites as 'Jenny pluck pears', 'Seventeen come Sunday' and 'Sellinger's Round'. The arrangements here for military band – brass plus woodwind – are all masterly, inspiring phenomenally precise ensemble from the brilliant RAF Central Band under its conductor, Wing Commander Duncan Stubbs.

It is good to have the two Holst suites for military band alongside the winning RVW, Holst having written his Suites early in his career when he had to eke out a living playing in bands. Each of the suites is in three movements, with the folk melodies brilliantly interwoven. Played with sparkle as here, they are a delight from first to last.

Percy Grainger's *Lincolnshire Posy* and Ernest Tomlinson's *Suite of English Folk Dances* are altogether simpler in structure, the one a sequence of six dances collected in Lincolnshire and the other, dating from much later (1999 in its military band form), consisting of six more dances, artfully set. Rounding off the whole sequence is the Rhapsody of Gordon Langford, a substantial piece involving a whole range of dances. With such brilliant performances recorded vividly, there is no risk of the sequence outstaying its welcome. Pure delight for anyone in love with English folk music.

Edward Greenfield

'New Music With Guitar, Vol 9'

Lansky With the Grain^a Ruders Schrödinger's Cat^b Wernick The Name of the Game^c David Starobin gtr^d Amalia Hall vn^a Alabama Symphony Orchestra / Justin Brown; 'International Contemporary Ensemble' / Cliff Colnot

Bridge © BRIDGE9444 (55' • DDD)



The words 'new music with guitar' can strike fear into the heart of even the most intrepid musical explorer. Thankfully this is never the case with classical guitarist David Starobin's superb series for Bridge, which features music, often written expressly for Starobin – one of today's most passionate and tireless advocates for new guitar music – by some of the 20th century's finest composers including Elliott Carter, George Crumb and Poul Ruders. This latest instalment in the series includes chamber and orchestral works by Ruders, Richard Wernick and Paul Lansky, all of whose music has featured on previous volumes. It is also one of the series' most attractive

volumes to date, the compositions satisfying both the intellect and the soul.

Wernick's *The Name of the Game* for guitar and other instruments including winds, strings, percussion and harp is possibly the most challenging for listeners, its core material being based on the letters of Starobin's name. But Wernick's playful temperament and extraordinary ear for colour win the day. From the title of Ruders's *Schrödinger's Cat* – 12 canons for violin and guitar – one might suspect a dry academic exercise. This is anything but, with the 12 short and tuneful canons by turns frenetic, joyful, wistful and everything in between. The movement titles of Lansky's guitar concerto *With the Grain* provoke the opposite reaction, with 'Redwood Burl', 'Karelian Birch', 'Quilted Beech' and 'Walnut Burl' more than fulfilling their promise with evocative melodies and richly hued orchestration.

As always with Bridge, the performances are exemplary, the recorded sound demonstration quality.

William Yeoman

'The Orchestra'

'Claudio Abbado and the Musicians of the Orchestra Mozart'

A film by Helmut Failoni and Francesco Merini

EuroArts © DVD 206 0738; © 206 0734

(70' • NTSC • 16:9 • 1080i • PCM stereo • 0 • s)



The Orchestra Mozart, Claudio Abbado's last great musical project, ran into financial trouble

even before the maestro's death. Hence this modest film, documenting the public and private lives of group members during their 2012-13 tour, emerges as a double memorial. Abbado fans will be particularly interested in the extended informal interview in the accompanying booklet. There's much less of Abbado talking in the film itself. Music-making is also unexpectedly sparse, mere shards identified only in the closing titles and in any case likely to be subsumed beneath Uri Caine's fashionable pianistic doodles.

What the makers Helmut Failoni and Francesco Merini find most fascinating about Orchestra Mozart is its unlikely mélange of players of diverse age, nationality, temperament and playing style. We have brief footage of Venezuelan slums as well as glossier images of the tour's affluent stopovers, places like Bologna, Lucerne, Vienna, Madrid and Palermo.

Gone are the days when a feature of this kind might have been expected to embrace a few dissenting voices, let alone talk politics directly, but was there really no room for an investigation of the band's graceful blend of historically informed practice and more traditional 'modern' approaches (and instruments)? True aficionados will presumably already have the audio-visual Bach *Brandenburg Concertos* set down by these forces in 2007 (Medici Arts, 4/09 – also issued in EuroArts' 80th-birthday DVD package, 'Claudio Abbado: A Life Dedicated to Music'). It must be counted a weakness of the present release that we never get to see a full performance.

In short, there's nothing here to sway those immune to the Abbado cult. We all know about Abbado's refusal to cajole his players or impose his own conceptual ideas, preferring to work as an enabler with friends rather than as a director of professional clock-watchers. The conductor claims that his habit of memorising scores is a psychological necessity, liberating him to communicate directly with collaborators through glance or gesture. Audiences and critics alike tend to be wowed by that sort of thing, old LSO hands less so. Yes, it's interesting to see his Bologna base and his personal stash of orchestral material, but I was expecting more than the vague implication that it would make for a better world if we would only listen to each other more. Sound and vision are admirably crisp.

David Gutman

'Poema'

'Works for Cello and Strings'

Kangas Cello Concerto Nordgren HATE-LOVE,

Op 71 Sallinen Chamber Music VIII,

'Paavo Haavikko in memoriam', Op 94

Salmenhaara Poema

Marko Ylönen VC

Ostrobothnain Chamber Orchestra / Juha Kangas

Alba © ABCD372 (64' • DDD/DSD)



Erkki Salmenhaara (1941-2002) was at one time an avant-garde firebrand, his first three symphonies (1962-64) and some other works employing Ligetian chord clusters and other devices designed to provoke. By the time of *Poema* in 1975, his eloquent musing on Chopin's ubiquitous Funeral March, his style had moved into postmodernism, a shift anticipated 10 years earlier. Originally written for violin, the transcription – it's



'Claudio Abbado's last great musical project': a new documentary on EuroArts DVD follows the late conductor and his Orchestra Mozart on their 2012-13 tour

unclear by whose hands – for cello proves deeply atmospheric in Ylönen's persuasive hands.

The emotional intensity is ramped up considerably, as one might expect from the title, in Pehr Henrik Nordgren's *HATE-LOVE* (1987), though its inspiration was not divulged by the composer. Not the soloist and orchestra, presumably, as this is their second recording of it, this new account markedly quicker than their 1990 predecessor. A single-span fantasia, it packs a more concentrated punch than the Concerto of 2010 by Juho Kangas, born the year after *Poema* was completed and the son of the Ostrobothnian Chamber Orchestra's eminent founder-conductor. Its inclusion here is on merit and its volatile outer movements provide much-needed expressive contrast.

Sallinen's eighth and most recent *Chamber Music* (2008-09) shows the composer in serious mood commemorating the great writer Paavo Haavikko, so lacks the jaw-dropping japeries of the third in the series, *The Nocturnal Dances of Don Juanquixote*, also for cello (1983). The only explicitly memorial work, the mood is not exclusively sombre, the single movement's several sections containing shades of dark and light. Ylönen is a wonderful advocate

and his partnership with the Ostrobothnians throughout is hugely eloquent. Alba's sound is superb.

Guy Rickards

Nordgren – comparative version:

Ylönen, Ostrobothnian CO, Kangas (ONDI) ODE737-2

'Revolution'

Devienne Flute Concerto No 7 **Gianella** Flute Concerto No 1 **Gluck** Flute Concerto, Op 4 **Pleyel** Flute Concerto, Ben106

Emmanuel Pahud fl

Basle Chamber Orchestra / Giovanni Antonini
Warner Classics © 2564 62767-8 (73' • DDD)



These four concertos are linked by the fact that they were all composed in Paris

immediately before or after the French Revolution. They have been part of Emmanuel Pahud's repertoire since his days at the Paris Conservatoire.

For the flute, François Devienne was to the French school and Mozart's age what Quantz was to the German school and the days of Frederick the Great. Paradoxically, his E minor Concerto, probably the best known of the 14 he wrote and regularly

used today as a test piece in competitions, opens with the nervous energy of a CPE Bach flute concerto. That's before the soloist enters with a graceful classical subject that tells us we have entered a different world. The rondo finale is a *tour de force* (as Pahud admits in the booklet, 'it pushes the flautist to the limit'), played with a joyful verve that far outstrips the prosaic András Adorján (Tudor) but closely resembles Pahud's teacher Alain Marion (Denon). Pahud, though, has the advantage of a crisper acoustic and the enlivening support of the Basle Chamber Orchestra. The delightful if slighter works of Luigi Gianella and Gluck (the latter boasting a really lovely *Adagio*) precede Pleyel's demanding C major Concerto. Here again Pahud and the quality of the recording score even over such rivals as Patrick Gallois (Naxos), with livelier tempi and Gallic insouciance.

A most attractive disc and thoughtfully presented, too: apart from a jolly double-page photo of the Basle players, the familiar portrait of Devienne (from the studio of Jacques-Louis David) reproduced in the booklet is complemented by a striking photograph of Pahud in front of David's cartoon *Le serment du jeu de paume*.

Jeremy Nicholas

Mahler's Ninth Symphony

Conductor **Iván Fischer** joins Rebecca Schmid to talk about a work way ahead of its time

Mahler didn't live to hear the Ninth Symphony, his last completed work. In an effort to escape the fateful number nine, which had marked the end for both Beethoven and Bruckner, he had given a non-numerical title to the preceding symphonic work *Das Lied von der Erde*, telling his wife, Alma, that the Ninth was 'actually the Tenth'. He went on to compose parts of a Tenth Symphony, which is sometimes seen as the last instalment of a trilogy, though conductors such as Mengelberg and Walter considered the Ninth to be his definitive farewell. Mahler composed the work in summer 1909, when he was probably already suffering from a heart condition. Two years later, in New York, he would conduct his last concert.

Although Mahler had already begun using subversive elements in his earlier symphonies, the Ninth's intricate motivic development, dissolution of tonality and extreme orchestration became so far-reaching as to create a direct bridge to the Second Viennese School, at least according to Theodor Adorno. When I meet Iván Fischer – who has just recorded the work with his Budapest Festival Orchestra for Channel Classics – at the Berlin Konzerthaus, he maintains that Mahler can't be explained through formal analysis. 'The best approach is not to think of sonata form, or anything similar, but in terms of a sequence of psychoanalytical association,' he says. 'Music poured out of Mahler. He knew what had to come next because it was an impulse. I find it extremely intuitive and also logical. He was a master of changing moods.'

Fischer glances through his pocket score. At home he has consulted several full-size editions, including a photocopy of Mengelberg's score which preserves commentary based on the conductor's conversations with Alma. 'There is the possibility that some of these ideas could be related to what Mahler had in mind,' says Fischer. 'It was for me a great experience to read through the remarks.' Fischer mentions as an example Mengelberg's inscription *Todesglocke* (death bell) above the broken harp motif in the opening bars of the slow first movement. 'Something that Mengelberg found important, and which I also find important, is that this music is heart-breakingly sad and yet is still in a major key. It really makes you want to cry.' Fischer goes on to admire Mahler's orchestration: 'The combination of a cello, deep horn and harp, passing the music from instrument to instrument, is an incredible and very daring use of colour. It immediately goes under the skin. In every measure there is an extraordinary innovation.'



Fischer calls the Ninth's final Adagio 'the most beautiful music you can imagine'

In bar seven, the violins sing a broken melody, maintaining the beat established in the introduction. 'This opens the whole question of arrhythmic music in Mahler's mind,' says Fischer. 'We know from his biographies that he had a very strange walk. It was difficult to walk with him because you sometimes had to slow down and sometimes rush. You can also follow Bernstein's idea that these are his arrhythmic heartbeats.' Fischer hears particular justification for this theory at figure 15, which for him represents the turning point from tragedy to catastrophe. The 'death bell' rhythm resurfaces in the timpani, the low strings and then the trombones, ushering in a march-like procession. 'I always find it to be the prophetic side of Mahler,' says Fischer. 'He died before the First World War, so I have no idea how he could see this coming, but what I always hear is the later 20th century: the Holocaust, the marching boots. I especially think of his songs "Wo die schönen Trompeten blasen" and "Der Tambourgesell". It was somehow in the air.' As Fischer notes, however, Mahler winds down the movement to a 'chamber-like simplicity' in which the flute and horn engage in eerily detached dialogue.



The historical view

Theodor Adorno

Wiener Rede, 1960, cited in 'Schönberg, Adorno [et al] über Gustav Mahler' (Rainer Wunderlich Verlag: 1966)

'Nothing remains but fragments and the sweetness of flatteringly futile trust. The last work that Mahler completed...is the first modern music.'

Alban Berg

A letter to his wife, Helene, most likely 1912

'The first movement is the most splendid thing Mahler ever wrote. It is the expression of an unheard-of love for this earth, the yearning to live in peace on it, to profit from nature in her innermost depth – before death arrives.'

Bruno Walter

Gustav Mahler: Ein Porträt von Bruno Walter (S Fischer Verlag: 1957)

'In the third movement, Mahler puts his contrapuntal mastery to the test, only to give a reposeful adieu in the final movement, [which resembles] the passing of a cloud in the blue, heavenly realm.'

Mahler designates the following movement as a 'leisurely' but 'somewhat awkward and very crude' Ländler. Fischer detects in moments of parody Mahler's complex relationship with Austria as a Bohemian and a Jew. 'He probably didn't feel comfortable, but he also had an enormous affection. It comes out in a complicated way in his symphonies. There is a certain roughness. Here it is a little more difficult to find the dreamlike beauty of earlier symphonies. This is more bitter.' Mahler juxtaposes three different tempos, the third of which is the slowest and most lyrical while the second fast tempo can spin a bit out of control, says Fischer: 'It moves in and out as his mood changes, as if in a free dream. There is a lyrical feeling here,' he says with reference to the sweeping horn motif over *staccato* bassoon and cello in bar 218. 'But it doesn't allow us to listen for too long; the grotesque very soon returns.'

Fischer considers the third movement, *Rondo-Burleske*, the most Classically constructed of the symphony, with the

'There's something crazy about his way of composing...another composer wouldn't know how to do these little tricks' – Iván Fischer

exception of a Trio that emerges out of nowhere with a 'dreamlike trumpet' at bar 350. He describes the instrumentation of the opening bars as if 'a ball were being thrown from one instrument to the next. You could actually play this with one instrument,' he says, singing the motif which passes from the trumpet, to strings, to horns. 'But he decided to constantly change the colour and keep our attention high. There is something crazy about his way of composing, but it's actually extremely effective.' To highlight Mahler's mastery of expressive detail, he flips back to bar 199, where the violins are instructed to use downbows on harmonic grace notes above trombones and low strings. 'Another composer wouldn't know how to do these little tricks. He wants a bite to every note. And he knew how to make it happen.'

Fischer calls the final *Adagio* 'the most beautiful music you can imagine'. 'Mahler's attitude towards love,' he says, 'is a little bit like divine love – not aimed at a person or personal interests. It is like a light which embraces everybody. He and Beethoven are the only composers able to achieve this.' For Fischer, the music vacillates between a Romantic lyricism embodying a 'human quality' and a sense of detachment from reality, such as when a double bassoon plays against the very high range of the violin in bar 40. Starting in bar 88, marked *stets sehr gehalten* (always very held), Fischer hears a rocking pulse in the clarinets and harp drawn from *Das Lied von der Erde*.

Following a sparse contrapuntal exchange among the woodwinds and low strings, the passion breaks out fully with a *fortissimo* in the strings. 'It becomes more and more desperate and comes to an almost unbearable climax. But then, in a last effort, he brings back this romantically affectionate music when the horns play the melody with the cellos. And then it just loses its impetus, like a fading awareness.' Fischer finds the composer's dynamic indications to be at their most clear and sophisticated: 'My guess is that if Mahler had lived long enough to conduct this, he wouldn't have changed much.'

► To read Gramophone's review of Fischer's Mahler Ninth turn to page 31

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Philip Clark on In C Mali, a dream project with African musicians:

'Not only is the line-up of instruments unfamiliar, many of the instruments offer up fresh timbral treats' ► REVIEW ON PAGE 50

Beethoven

'Complete String Quartets, Vol 4'

String Quartets – No 1, Op 18 No 1; No 14, Op 131

Cremona Quartet

Audite ④ AUDITE92 683 (68' • DDD/DSD)



Audite's recording is close if not claustrophobic, close enough to differentiate the character of the four Italian instruments as well as their players – the 20th-century viola and cello are more reticent if more timbrally even than the Amati and Testore instruments used by the violinists. The microphones catch both the leader's sniff and the rather wide and slow vibrato he uses in general; I prefer the pure tone employed by him and his colleagues to chilling effect in the *Adagio* of Op 18 No 1, which is invested with an unusual depth of expression. The dramatic silences are given full measure around *Eroica*-like intensifications of the main theme's second half at the movement's climax, and the players don't let the tension slacken with a sentimental *rallentando* but bend the coda with discreet *portamento*.

Right from the subtle play with Beethoven's opening gambit – first tentative, then more assured, like a guest at the door putting their party face on – this is a performance that moves with purpose and takes care over the small things. Both the *Scherzo* and its Trio push on relentlessly – it's a small room for a busy party and the guests are inclined to talk to your face – with plenty of buzz from the cellist as he lays into a point. The confrontational tonal profile of the quartet is more obviously suited to the abrupt contrasts of Op 131. The stabbing accents of the opening *Adagio* would cut deeper at a lower dynamic level, and throughout there is a lack of really quiet, inward playing, even in the central *Andante*. Accordingly the finale is a first cousin to the *Grosse Fuge*, raw and impressively provisional.

Peter Quantrill

Beethoven

Piano Trios – No 2, Op 1 No 2; No 5, 'Ghost',

Op 70 No 1. Variations on 'Ich bin der Schneider Kakadu', Op 121a

Trio Ex Aequo

Genuin ④ GEN15344 (80' • DDD)



Personal projection at the highest level predominates in Op 70 No 1. From the *fortissimo* up-rush, *Allegro vivace e con brio* as directed, to the succeeding song-like theme on cello marked *dolce*, passion and emotional intensity are communicated within a framework of assured technical address. For the Trio Ex Aequo, content and expression are inextricably tied, structure respected. Both repeats are observed, the latter important for its first- and second-time bars. No let up of fervour and commitment in the other movements either, the *Largo assai ed espressivo* breathing an air of depth and mystery, disquiet conjured in a beginning played not only softly but *sotto voce* as well. Violent transitory outbursts are meticulously graded, pianist Olga Gollej balancing herself astutely with her partners.

Trio Ex Aequo take on the responsibility of interpreting this work as they feel it within themselves, and mostly do the same for Op 2 No 1. Mostly, because a slow tempo for the *Scherzo* masks its quirky humour; their choice errs instead towards a stately minuet, a shortcoming the Florestan Trio avoid (Hyperion, 6/04). For the rest Gollej, Matthias Wollong and Matthias Moosdorf repeat the penetrating insights that make Op 70 No 1 so memorable an experience. And if they don't quite pick Beethoven's sly jests in the *Kakadu* Variations, it is still a performance of stature. **Nalen Anthoni**

Borgström

Romanze, Op 12. Violin Sonata, Op 19.

Serenade. Elegie. Berceuse

Jonas Båtstrand *vn* Helge Kjekshus *pf*

Simax ④ PSC1237 (52' • DDD)



Like other Norwegian Romantics with ears open to modern trends – Grieg and Ibsen

come immediately to mind – Hjalmar Borgström (1864-1925) needed both to study and to live abroad (Leipzig and Berlin) before attaining some measure of recognition at home, and some of that as a stern music critic. The smaller-scale Borgström captured here has more of the conservative late-19th-century salon and bandstand about it than previous repertoire recorded by Simax – the handful of neo-Lisztian tone-poems (their subjects include *Hamlet* and Ibsen's *John Gabriel Borkman*), mythical-subject operas and concertos at which the composer tried his hand on his return home from Germany.

This is a music decidedly Classical, and German Classical, in both form and content, although not clearly influenced by that almost contemporary lodestone Johannes Brahms. Neither does it sound intrinsically Nordic. Of the more harmonically adventurous new music heard overseas by Borgström – including Wagner opera, claimed by the composer as a significant spur to his composition – there is barely a trace. But you may understand the fascination with re-establishing the idiom described (in the booklet here) by soloist Jonas Båtstrand in following up his 2010 recording of the Violin Concerto.

The violin-writing in the 1906 G major Sonata is complex, of evident difficulty in the *Vivace* finale and of sufficient melodic interest to sustain a work of more than half an hour. Technical traps also abound in the 1900 *Romanze*, dedicated to Ysaÿe. The piano parts, especially in the sonata, are often *primus inter pares* rather than just accompaniment or support, perhaps reflecting Borgström's love for the pianist at the premiere, Amalie Müller, his future wife: the recording here of Kjekshus's



The Cremona Quartet: the latest volume of their Beethoven survey 'moves with purpose and takes care over the small things'

enthusiastic participation fully supports this theory. The keen performances serve this serious but not hugely seductive music well.

Mike Ashman

Brahms · Weiner

'The Hungarian Connection'

Brahms Clarinet Quintet, Op 115. Hungarian Dances, WoO1 - No 1; No 7. Liebeslieder Waltz, Op 52 No 6 **Weiner** Két Tétel - two movts

Traditional Dances from Transylvania

Andreas Ottensamer *cl* **Leonidas Kavakos**,

Christoph Koncz *vns* **Antoine Tamestit** *va* **Stephan**

Koncz *vc* **Ödön Rácz** *db* **Oszkár Ökrös** *cimbalom*

Predrag Tomić *acco*

DG © 4811409DH (62' • DDD)



This album explores Brahms's lifelong fascination with Hungarian idioms.

The programme, following the Quintet, comprises a series of arrangements by the group's cellist Stephan Koncz, which gradually loosen the strict discipline of a classical chamber group, moving towards the freely expressive style of a Hungarian restaurant band. The arrangements are marvellously well done, and the sequence

ranges from the comfortable warmth of Brahms waltzes to the distinctly exotic sound of the Transylvanian medley. (Listeners will find some of these melodies familiar; they appear in Bartók's *Romanian Dances*.) The Leó Weiner pieces, originally for clarinet and piano, transmit an atmosphere of peasant music, while the *Hungarian Dances* are arranged to give the impression of a gypsy band, with spectacular solo contributions from clarinet, violin and cimbalom.

The performance of the Quintet is a fine one, with lovely clarinet tone, excellent overall sound and a deep understanding of the work's varied character. Andreas Ottensamer appreciates the need for some rhythmic freedom, not least in the elaborate Hungarian music in the *Adagio*, but I don't find his *rubato* as convincing as Reginald Kell's in his wonderful 1937 recording with the Busch Quartet – Kell is better at keeping the listener aware of the underlying rhythmic framework. And in the finale, I feel there's a miscalculation in slowing up for the third and fourth variations; this takes away from the tragic effect of the *poco meno mosso* marked when the first movement's theme is recalled. But it's a fascinating issue, with playing of mastery and versatility. **Duncan Druce**

Cl Qnt – selected comparison:

Kell, Busch Qt (PEAR) GEM0007

Chopin · Franchomme

Chopin Cello Sonata, Op 65. Polonaise brillante, Op 3. Etude, Op 25 No 7 (transcr Glazunov).

Nocturne, Op 15 No 1 (transcr Franchomme)

Chopin/Franchomme Grand duo concertant on Themes from Meyerbeer's 'Robert le diable'

Franchomme Nocturne, Op 14 No 1

Sol Gabetta *vc* **Bertrand Chamayou** *pf*

Sony Classical © 88845 09301-2 (70' • DDD)



The performance of the Sonata is on a large scale, with generous, full tone and a vivid, resonant recording. Gabetta and Chamayou appreciate the first movement's grandeur and emotional force, and the listener is swept along with their vision. Sometimes I found myself wishing for a lighter, more delicate manner, particularly from the piano. A recent recording by Johannes Moser and Ewa Kupiec provides an alternative view, more relaxed and flowing and, I suspect, closer to what Chopin had in mind. But Gabetta and Chamayou's approach is very persuasive,

above all in the finale, which generates an irresistible rhythmic momentum. In the *Scherzo*, the Trio is unusually slow but Gabetta projects her melody with conviction and intensity. I found the *Largo* much less successful; at this very slow tempo it's almost impossible to give the listener a sense of the long arcs of melody.

Both the Polonaise and the *Grand duo* are given exciting performances, full of energy and vigour but tending to lack those moments of intimacy that throw into relief the predominant brilliant colours. The three short pieces that complete the programme are full of interest. Glazunov's arrangement of the Etude is extremely expert, while Franchomme's transcription surprisingly but successfully combines the outer section of the Op 15 No 1 Nocturne with a section of Op 37 No 1. His own Nocturne seems very plain in its harmony after Chopin but is still a beautiful cello piece. Sol Gabetta plays them all with lovely tone and sensitive phrasing.

Duncan Druce

Vc Son – selected comparison:

Moser, Kupiec (1/15) (HANS) CD93 322

Franck • R Strauss

Franck Violin Sonata R Strauss Violin

Sonata, Op 18. Allegretto, AV149. Morgen!

Op 27 No 4. Waldseligkeit, Op 49 No 1.

Wiegenlied, Op 41 No 1

James Ehnes *vn* **Andrew Armstrong** *pf*

Onyx (M) ONYX4141 (70' • DDD)



Occupying the central place in the canon of Romantic violin repertoire as it does,

Franck's Violin Sonata is programmed in countless ways in its countless appearances on disc. So it is refreshing, therefore, that this disc places the Franck alongside Strauss's Violin Sonata, and in doing so deals more plainly with the listener, presenting together two of the greatest violin works of the period in all their infinitely similar variety.

The root of each is romantic with a small 'r' as well as a capital – the Franck famously written as a wedding present for Ysaÿe; the Strauss in the period he met and fell passionately in love with his wife, Pauline de Ahna – and they both use the deceptively simple technique of a single musical idea that evolves over the course of the whole sonata. The latter is a particularly difficult musical approach to master artistically, and it is one of the most appealing elements of this disc's performance that James Ehnes and Andrew

Armstrong make a kaleidoscope of both sonatas that reflects their almost indistinguishable elements and which, in turn, honours the profoundly romantic nature of both works (which is presented equally well in the smaller-scale arrangements of four of Strauss's Lieder).

There is a soulfulness behind the technical perfection of Ehnes's playing that truly supports each work from their parallel tentative openings, through the emotional quagmire of their middle sections to their purgative closing sections. There is rarely adequate justification for a new recording of either sonata in such an overstuffed catalogue but the unqualified musicianship and transcendent phrasing certainly offer one here. **Caroline Gill**

J Jenkins

Four-Part Fantasies

Accademia Strumentale Italiana

Stradivarius (F) STR37002 (71' • DDD)



I cannot recall quite so targeted a selection of John Jenkins's viol music: previous

recitals by Phantasm, Fretwork and Jérôme Hantai have mixed different types of scoring or genre, whereas here we are given all 17 of his four-voice fantasias in one go. The great variety within this unity may only reveal itself gradually but the fantasia was regarded as the highest form of untexted musical invention, and in Jenkins's hands it amply rewards repeated listening. A contemporary commentator states that he breathed new life into the fantasia, and even with just four voices there is plenty to keep the attentive listener happily preoccupied: the sequence that ratchets up the tonality one step at a time in the 12th Fantasia is perhaps the most striking example among many.

The Accademia Strumentale Italiana, based in Verona, acquit themselves admirably. On this showing their approach to the viol repertory is nearer Fretwork's than Phantasm's and they convey the sense of alert concentration that is essential in this music. A word might be said of their decision to pitch the music a fourth lower than 'written' pitch, so that the top parts are entrusted to an alto viol rather than a treble, and the bottom part to a violone. Whatever the historical arguments for or against this approach, and while acknowledging the added richness of tone it affords, it must be said that the violone may struggle to make itself heard on certain sound systems, especially when its part is

especially low and active. Once noted, however, this reservation is easily cast aside. **Fabrice Fitch**

Lawes

The Royal Consort. Three Consorts to the Organ

Phantasm with **Elizabeth Kenny** *theo*

Emily Ashton *tenor viol* **Daniel Hyde** *org*

Linn (F) (2) CKD470 (144' • DDD/DSD)



William Lawes's 10 *Royal Consort* sets (or suites) were probably composed

for the Caroline court during the 1630s. Unswerving royalist loyalty cost him his life at the Siege of Chester in 1645, but not before he had made six-part rearrangements for two violins, bass viols and theorbos. This later version has an eminent discography but Phantasm instead present the first complete recording of the original pieces for four-part viol consort and theorbo. Performer-scholar Laurence Dreyfus begins his 14-page booklet essay in bold fashion: 'One mustn't mince words. To put it frankly, this is one of the greatest collections of ensemble dance music ever composed.' He argues that Lawes's sets are on a par with Bach's Orchestral Suites and Rameau's ballet music but criticises that the later expanded versions 'offer a clear case of how artists can spoil their work by an excess of fussing'.

Phantasm's playing brims with imaginative fantasy and dance-like momentum, although from time to time Lawes's unpredictable liberties with irregular phrase lengths would not have suited actual dancers (eg an Aire and Corant at the core of Set No 7). Every shift in imitative contrapuntal detail, rhythmical emphasis and melodic direction serves a conversational discourse between the pair of treble viols (Dreyfus and Emilia Benjamin) and the tenor and bass viols (Jonathan Manson, Mikko Perkola and Markku Luolajan-Mikkola); Elizabeth Kenny's theorbo continuo realisations are a model of tasteful clarity. Concise individual pieces often display rare sophistication, such as the seemingly floating Paven that begins No 9 and a song-like Galliard in No 2. A vividly accentuated 'Morris' folk dance follows hot on the heels of an elegant Corant (No 6) without any hint of formulaic articulation. Strong doses of Jacobean melancholy are abundant in a few longer pieces such as the Paven in D minor that starts No 2; this is one of several pavans that quotes from Dowland's *Lacrimae* but the inclusion of an extra short



'A remarkable, refined collaboration': Florian Deuter and Mónica Waisman come together to play Leclair sonatas on Accent

set for four-part viols dating from earlier in Lawes's career suggests that Dowland's influence cast a subtler shadow later on. A pleasing broadening of textures is injected into this beguiling survey by the additional tenor violist Emily Ashton and organist Daniel Hyde in some denser six-part sets that could not be squeezed on to Phantasm's 2012 recording of Lawes's *Consorts to the Organ* (2/13). **David Vickers**

Selected comparisons (six-part versions with violins):

Purcell Qt (11/95) (CHAN) CHAN0584

Voix Humaines (9/12) (ATMA) ACD2 2373

Leclair

Six Sonatas for Two Violins, Op 12

Florian Deuter, Mónica Waisman *vnrs*

Accent © ACC24298 (80' • DDD)



Two violinists playing mid-18th-century French music without continuo? Leclair

published two sets 17 years apart, of which this, the second, appeared in 1747. Whereas collections for amateur flute/recorder and treble viol players were available earlier, none approach the virtuoso writing encountered here. So what

of the supposed lack of accompaniment? It has simply been transposed to the violin register and expertly interwoven into the rich array of two-part textures characterising Leclair's music.

Florian Deuter and Mónica Waisman, both members of Harmonie Universelle, play on a pair of exquisitely matched instruments made by the modern Dutch luthier Matthieu Besseling. Theirs is a remarkable, refined collaboration, which makes the frequent interchange of roles within the music nearly impossible to discern – assuming anyone might wish to unpick the seams! This is particularly so in the *moto perpetuo* movements (trs 5 and 11) that feature obligato accompaniments; the delicacy of the demanding *bariolage* accompaniment of the E major *Largo* creates a magical backdrop for the melody. Elsewhere the violinists banter, be it in syncopated passages or the expression of chromatic motifs; the high-wire badinage in the G minor finale (tr 18) is hair-raising. The oneness of their tone (note the lovely soft-edged cadences), phrasing and timing are as one might expect from a hypothetical solo virtuoso.

After patiently waiting for a recording on violins of this delightful italianate French music, we now have had two in the space of

a year. Greg Ewer and Adam LaMotte released both sets (Opp 3 & 12) for Sono Luminus while in 1999 Dimitar Penkov and Johannes Flieder recorded Op 12 on violas for Gega. Never mind! This newest version is a musical delight. **Julie Anne Sadie**

Mozart

'The Six String Quartets Dedicated to Haydn' String Quartets – No 14, K387; No 15, K421; No 16, K428; No 17, 'Hunt', K458; No 18, K464; No 19, 'Dissonance', K465

Cambini-Paris Quartet

Ambrosie ™ ③ AM213 (3h 32' • DDD)



The Quatuor Cambini-Paris have so far tended to focus on the more esoteric areas

of the quartet repertoire – notably Jadin and Félicien David (7/12). But here they fling themselves into a crowded arena and, even among period instrument groups, there's no lack of competition.

They're keen to convey the sheer breadth of Mozart's 'Haydn' Quartets, grasping every opportunity to demonstrate his daringly bold writing. In the opening of the *Dissonance*, for instance, they luxuriate in the

extraordinary harmonic tension; similarly, they set a deliberate pace in the slow movement, underlining its hymnic quality. Turn to the Chiaroscuro and their ongoing cycle on *Aparte* and you get a quite different approach: they set off at a faster pace which generates more tension precisely because of its momentum – that and a rawness that comes from the most sparing use of vibrato. Then in the slow movement they offer a more conversational tone, while the Minuet is more natural-sounding in terms of dynamics. In the finale, Ibragimova is more sweet-toned than the leader of the new set. This new recording also captures the players very close, which means every breath and extraneous noise is caught, which may prove distracting to some.

Again, in K428 there's plenty of expressivity and character in this new reading; however, the *Mosaïques* endow the first movement with a more febrile unease, while the Chiaroscuro offer a wistfully withdrawn quality, and it is contrasts in phrasing as much as in dynamics that make their reading compelling. In the slow movement, too, they have a rapt sensitivity, compared to which the Cambini-Paris can sound lurid in their use of hairpin dynamics. But the Minuet has an engaging boisterousness in the new version (here I find the *Mosaïques* too slow). The finale requires nerves of steel: the Cambini-Paris set a great pace but the first violin's semiquavers are not as fastidiously realised as in the Chiaroscuro's reading; nor, for that matter, compared to the benchmark Hagen reading.

The same trends can be found elsewhere in the set. The opening of K421 lacks the desperate edge that others find, while the Chiaroscuro impart a delicious story-telling quality to the variations of the finale, where the Cambini-Paris are several degrees less finely nuanced. And in the *Hunt*, K458, they can't quite match the one-in-a-bar quality that makes the *Mosaïques* so infectious, while the *Adagio* once again falls victim to an overly spacious tempo and exaggerated dynamics in the new reading.

If there were no other period-instrument groups in this repertoire this would make for an interesting addition to the catalogue, but they are, alas, outclassed by the *Mosaïques* and, even more so, the Chiaroscuro's as-yet incomplete series.

Harriet Smith

'Haydn' Qts – selected comparisons:

Hagen Qt (2/97⁸, 4/02⁸) (DG) 477 6253GB7

Mosaïques Qt (NAIV) E8843/5 (oas)

Rieti

'Music for Harpsichord and Instruments'
Triptych^a. Concertino for Five Instruments^b.

Sonata breve^c. Pastorale e fughetta^d.

Sonata all'antica^e. Variations on Two Cantigas de Santa Maria^f

ac^aMark Kroll, abdef^aMarina Minkin hpds

bdf^aMoshe Epstein fl^aYael Zamir ob

'Richard Paley bn^aCarol Lieberman vn

bd^aZvi Carmeli va^aElla Toovy vc^bJulia Rovinsky hp

New World © NW80764-2 (66' • DDD)



The composer and virtuoso harpsichordist Vittorio Rieti (1898–1994) is best known for

his long and enduring friendship with Igor Stravinsky, and someone less generous than myself might say that his music could sound more like Stravinsky than Stravinsky's own. Born in Egypt of Italian-Jewish parents, Rieti turns up in Paris in 1925 where he soaks in the music of Stravinsky, Auric, Poulenc and Milhaud, and that neo-classical sound world is pretty much where his music stayed until his death. Hearing his *Variations on Two Cantigas de Santa Maria* for flute, oboe, bassoon, cello and harpsichord, you're impressed. The resourcefulness of Rieti's paraphrasing of two 13th-century cantigas – his subtle harmonic memory games and cunning use of hardly-there instrumental forces – is the work of master craftsman. When you clock the date of composition – 1978 – you can't help but think about what Elliott Carter, Xenakis and Ligeti were doing with the harpsichord. But others will certainly admire Rieti's old-world charm.

All six pieces, recorded last year, are captured with a brilliance of sound, with harpsichord duties divided between Marina Minkin and Mark Knoll. Minkin's performance of the *Sonata all'antica* (1946) relishes Rieti's elusive bar-line shifts which delicately sex up a piece rooted in the Baroque. The Concertino for Five Instruments (1963) is perhaps the standout moment. The opening flute theme is genuinely affecting; and via various displays of Rieti's contrapuntal mastery, the music dives towards the controlled mania of its *Allegro* finale. Outstanding second-rate music. **Philip Clark**

Riley

In C Mali

Brian Eno, Bijou, Olugbenga vocs Adama Koita

kamel n'goni Alou Coulibaly calabash Andi Toma

percussion/kalimba André de Ridder vni/bar gtr/

kalimba Badou Mbaye djembe/perc Cheick Diallo fls

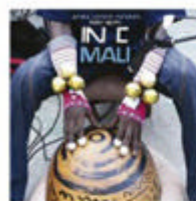
Damon Albarn melodica Djelifly Sako, Modibo

Diawara kora Guindo Sala imzad Kalifa Koné,

Mémé Koné balafon Nick Zinner, Jeff Wootton gtrs

Transgressive Records/Africa Express © 186CD

(41' • DDD)



Terry Riley's *In C* extends an open invitation.

Instrumentalists and singers with even rudimentary technical skills will likely have sufficient staying power to learn those 53 melodic soundbites which, in 1964, Riley outlined on one sheet of A4 paper. And the list of contenders who have chosen to accept his mission, from the Bang on a Can All Stars in New York City to Paul Hillier's Ars Nova Copenhagen and outwards towards Japanese psychedelic noise group Acid Mothers Temple, is impressive. But *In C* is not about reading notes. Riley's modular score is about internalising his melodic loops, then listening – hard – to the music's emerging shapes and directions, and making moment-to-moment decisions about how best to interweave your own contributions around the ensemble chatter.

In C Mali is, we're told, the first African interpretation of Riley's highly influential proto-minimalist score, a dream project instigated by the German conductor André de Ridder. Performances of the piece are intimately bound up with any chosen instrumentation; but not only is the line-up of instruments unfamiliar here, many of those instruments themselves offer up fresh timbral treats, to Western ears at least.

And there is time aplenty for the ear to linger during this 40-minute performance. Brian Eno pitches in with vocals while Damon Albarn (of beat combo Blur) plays melodica; otherwise the ensemble is made up from a starry cast of local musicians. The recording was cut in Bamako, the Mali capital, in 2013 with Cheick Diallo's flute featuring alongside the lute-like intonation of Djelifly Sako and Modibo Diawara on kora. Adama Koita on the harp-like kamel n'goni balances against Alou Coulibaly on calabash and Guindo Sala on the bowed imzad.

The repeated top C is, of course, heard but uniquely among recordings of *In C* are the torrent of dovetailing, waltzing currents of grooves underneath, beautifully captured in this recording's vivid sound picture. Midway, in a gesture not in the score, although this performance has been authorised by Riley, the pulse stops and one musician delivers his soulful soliloquy. Then the groove is reinstated and Riley's universal tonality once again finds itself in translation.

Philip Clark

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The Beethoven Festival is one of the leading music festivals in Germany, with concert programmes stretching far beyond the works of Beethoven alone. Under the direction of Nike Wagner, it attracts today's finest musicians and orchestras to the city where Beethoven was born in 1770.

Our visit to Bonn includes the opening concert conducted by Daniel Barenboim, three orchestral concerts, an evening of sonatas for cello and piano, and a piano recital by András Schiff. We stay at a comfortable 4* hotel in Bonn, adjacent to the Beethovenhalle and five minutes' walk from the historic city centre. Excursions to Cologne, Königswinter and Brühl are also included.

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Concerts are held in the architecturally dramatic Wolkenturm, the 'Tower of Clouds' in the grounds of the country estate of the grand Metternich family. Staying at the 4* Steigenberger Hotel set amongst the famous Grüner-Veltliner vineyards, we will also enjoy day trips to the picturesque village of Dürnstein, the Benedictine Abbey at Melk perched high above the Danube, and a panoramic tour of Vienna. In addition, we visit the pretty town of Tulln on the Danube to see the birthplace of Egon Schiele (1890 - 1918).



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MUSICAL ST. PETERSBURG

A FIVE NIGHT HOLIDAY | 9 NOVEMBER 2015

with Elizabeth Wilson

There are few better guides to the musical life of St Petersburg than acclaimed cellist Elizabeth Wilson, who studied under the great Rostropovich and has written biographies of both Rostropovich and Shostakovich. Elizabeth will introduce you to a city which is once again one of the most musically dynamic in the world. The Mariinsky's grand Imperial theatre has now been joined by Mariinsky 2 which opened in 2013 and a concert hall which was inaugurated in 2006. Add to this the beautiful Mikhailovsky Theatre which opened in 1833 and the sumptuous and decorative Philharmonic Hall which has been the city's leading orchestral venue since 1839 and you have a unique platform for musicians from all over the world.

Our tour of St Petersburg will focus on the musical history of the city, including two apartments not generally open to the public, where two of Russia's greatest composers lived - Shostakovich and Mussorgsky. Both were purchased for the city by Rostropovich and his wife Galina Vishnevskaya and we will be shown around by the curator of the Rostropovich Archive. Other visits will include a backstage tour of the Mariinsky Theatre, visits to the Alexander Nevsky Cemetery, Pushkin's Apartment, and the Rimsky-Korsakov apartment, the recently opened Fabergé Museum, and of course the Hermitage and the Russian Museum. We will also visit the spectacular Catherine Palace at Pushkin, and there will be opportunities to attend several concerts during our stay.

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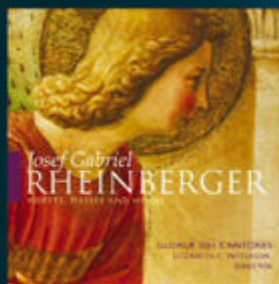
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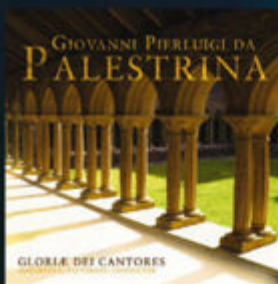
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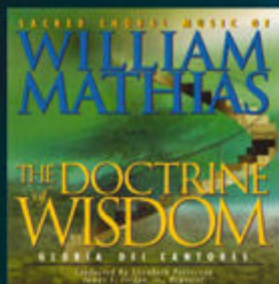
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Sallinen

Cello Sonata, Op 86. From a Swan Song, Op 67.
Piano Trio, Op 96^a

^a**Elina Vähälä** *vn* **Arto Noras** *vc* **Ralf Gothóni** *pf*
CPO © CPO777 814-2 (55' • DDD)



In his Piano Trio, completed in 2010, Aulis Sallinen

imagined 'the sensuous world of a painter going blind'. It seems a perfect (if saddening) image given Sallinen's inbuilt tendency to obsess over simple, tangible musical ideas. The first phase of the Trio appears to alight upon elements it can still 'see', latching on to them desperately. From that hesitance the Trio suffers a devastating loss of power and momentum, nearly sinking altogether as even those initial elements appear suddenly intangible. After a recovery of sorts comes an unspeakably beautiful ending – one of Sallinen's uncanny musical realisations of visual disappearance.

Even in Sallinen's grandest of symphonies we're used to things being said only when they really need to be said; his chamber works operate on absolutely the same fundamental architectural level but the minimal scoring means, perhaps, you sense even more the beauty with which he approaches his instruments. Particularly the cello, featured in all three pieces here and played with intense patience by Arto Noras (the dedicatee, as are all the musicians here in all three works), whether bowing or plucking. The Cello Sonata (2004), in my mind a Romantic sonata that suffers a nervous breakdown, is so very Finnish: flirting with tango, employing a Sibelian concision in which everything that happens seems to have emerged from what happened immediately before it, and eventually shutting off with utilitarian simplicity.

From a Swan Song (1991) for piano and cello uses a theme from Sallinen's satirical opera *The Palace*. It was fashioned as a test piece for a competition and it shows: a rare example of a Sallinen piece doing rather too much. Still, it's beautifully and delicately played, as is everything here. Eminently listenable-to music even at its most introspective, caught in impressive sound. **Andrew Mellor**

Schubert

'Complete Works for Violin and Piano'

Three Sonatinas – D384; D384; D408. Sonata, 'Grand Duo', D574^a. Rondeau brillant, D895.
Fantasie, D934. Fantasie, D940^a

Julia Fischer *vn* ^a**Martin Helmchen** *pf*

Pentatone © ② PTC5186 519 (132' • DDD/DSD)
From PTC5186 347 (12/09), PTC5186 348

Schubert

'Chamber Works'

Three Sonatinas^a – D384; D384; D408. Sonata, 'Grand Duo', D574^a. Rondeau brillant, D895^a.
Fantasie, D934^a. Arpeggione Sonata, D821^b.
Notturmo, D897^c

^a**Tasmin Little** *vn* ^b**Tim Hugh** *vc* **Piers Lane** *pf*
Chandos © ② CHAN10850 (149' • DDD)



Pentatone has packaged together the two volumes of Schubert recorded by Julia Fischer and Martin Helmchen in 2009. The performances have lost none of their allure in the intervening time (though there are some careless inaccuracies in the listings on the booklet and back cover), with readings that continue to engage and delight. This is as true in the youthful Sonatinas as in the larger-scale mature works. But does the new set of Schubert from Tasmin Little and Piers Lane change the landscape?

The Sonatinas come across best when given with an artless simplicity. Grumiaux was a master of this and he remains a hard act to follow. The finale of the First, for instance, sounds convincing in Little's hands until you turn to Grumiaux – who is a touch faster and utterly insouciant. I urge you to seek out these readings if you don't have them. Fischer gets closer than most to the spirit of the great Belgian both in the First Sonata and in the fervent opening movement of the Second, where Little and Lane are conspicuously freer with *rubato*. Their approaches to D574 – written in 1817, a year after the Sonatinas – are telling. Fischer and indeed Widmann seem to see this as a work of Classicism, whereas Little is clearly looking further into the 19th century. I particularly like Fischer and Helmchen in the finale, playful but utterly focused, compared to which Widmann and Lonquich are wilder and more unbuttoned, possibly too much so.

In the Rondo, D895, Fischer and Helmchen seem to focus more on the moments of introversion, Little on the work's outspoken brilliance, with Lane always a highly reactive partner. As for the extraordinary *Fantasie*, D934, the pianists set the scene in quite a different way. With Lane you're perhaps overly aware of the individual notes in the piano *tremolando*, whereas Helmchen draws attention to

Schubert's harmonic revelations. And Little sounds a touch grainy alongside Fischer's beautifully sustained line; Widmann's sparing vibrato, meanwhile, points up the sheer strangeness of this piece. In the same work's *Andantino*, Fischer/Helmchen conjure a lustrously haloed quality, while in the finale's muscular *Allegro* section Fischer never becomes rough-toned, which can't quite be said of Little. But then you turn to Busch and Serkin and you're on a different, more elevated plane altogether, even though the recording is over 80 years old.

Tim Hugh's mellow personality comes as something of a relief in the Arpeggione Sonata, though he doesn't reach the same level of plangency as Fournier in the slow movement. And to round out the set, they include a heartfelt reading of Schubert's *Notturmo*. **Harriet Smith**

D934, D895, D574 – selected comparison:

Widmann, *Lonquich* (5/12) (ECM) 476 4546

Fantasie, D934 – selected comparison:

Busch, *Serkin* (7/32^r, 4/88^r) (APR) APR5543

Arpeggione Sonata – selected comparison:

Fournier, *Hubeau* (DOCU) 600096

Sonatinas – selected comparison:

Grumiaux, *Castagnone*

(10/57^r, 11/93) (PHIL) 438 516-2PM3

R Schumann • C Schumann

C Schumann Three Romances, Op 22

R Schumann Violin Sonata No 2, Op 121.

Märchenbilder

Nurit Stark *vn/va* **Cédric Pescia** *pf*

Claves © 50 1502 (56' • DDD)



Programmes of Robert and Clara Schumann are becoming increasingly popular

these days, and Nurit Stark and Cédric Pescia, Israeli and Swiss respectively, present an imaginative menu that focuses on the years 1851 (Robert) and 1853 (Clara). They launch into Robert's Second Violin Sonata with great purpose and energy, its tumult well caught without exaggerated accentuation; effective too is the balance between the work's supercharged Romanticism and the unease derived from Schumann's inherently unstable rhythms. Stark is full-toned and ardent, which works well in the awestruck slow third movement. However, the finale seems to me misjudged: they take it at quite a lick and violin phrases sound snatched and breathless. If you want a full-throated reading of this style, sample Renaud Capuçon and Argerich in Lugano in 2008. But there are other approaches too: Carolin Widmann is distinctly more sparing in her

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'Much promise of things to come': the young Anglo-Irish Carducci Quartet 'clearly have the measure' of Shostakovich's String Quartets Nos 4, 8 and 11

vibrato and the piano-playing of Dénes Várjon more lithe. But finest of all is the Tetzlaff/Vogt reading that deservedly claimed Record of the Month: their freedom in the rhetorical writing, tonal finesse and sense of the whispered aside in the more lyrical interludes of the finale are utterly compelling.

Stark switches to the viola for the late *Märchenbilder*; her basic sound is glowing and rich, which is particularly effective in the first number (*Nicht schnell*), though in the fleet third (*Rasch*) Imai and Argerich are more urgent, and in the fourth more daringly withdrawn than the new version.

Clara's *Three Romances* benefit from speeds that never sag: in No 1 they're distinctly less dreamy than the Pike/Poster version, while the playful passages within the second come across well. But it's in the third that the differences become most apparent, with the new version giving it greater élan. **Harriet Smith**

R Schumann Vn Son No 2 – selected comparisons:

Widmann, Várjon (A/08) (ECM) 476 6744

Capuçon, Argerich (10/12) (EMI) 644701-2

Tetzlaff, Vogt (1/14) (ONDI) ODE1205-2

C Schumann Romances – selected comparison:

Pike, Poster (6/13) (CHAN) CHAN10762

R Schumann Märchenbilder – selected comparison:

Imai, Argerich (1/96) (EMI) 555484-2

Shostakovich

String Quartets – No 4, Op 83;

No 8, Op 110; No 11, Op 122

Carducci Quartet

Signum © SIGCD418 (63' • DDD)



Here is a more than respectable calling-card for the young Anglo-Irish

Carducci Quartet, who clearly have the technical measure of these three highly contrasting works from Shostakovich's quartet output. The opening of the post-war Fourth Quartet is as trenchant and forthright as it has to be, as indeed are all the fast and loud movements on the disc: the slashing *Allegro molto* of the Eighth is formidably clear as well as powerful, and the sardonic 'Recitative' of the Eleventh is properly horrifying. Agility also comes naturally to the ensemble, as in the nagging *Scherzos* of Nos 4 and 8 and the 'Etude' of No 11, and there is much to savour in their colouristic response – their strategic deployment of non vibrato, for example.

However, seasoned Shostakovich listeners may have more of a problem

with the Carducci's rather metronomic approach to rhythm. Of course his music needs metrical backbone and cannot tolerate self-indulgence. There is even an argument to made that we have become too familiar with the particular kind of expressive intensity passed down from the classic early Borodin Quartet recordings, forgetting that the Beethoven Quartet, who premiered all the works on this disc, were straighter in their approach. But not to let the Jewish theme in the finale of No 4 bend a little, not to find anything personal in the song-like themes in the first and fourth movements of No 8, and in general to be so in thrall to the tyranny of the bar-line, seems to me more a case of lack of experience and confidence than interpretative decision-making.

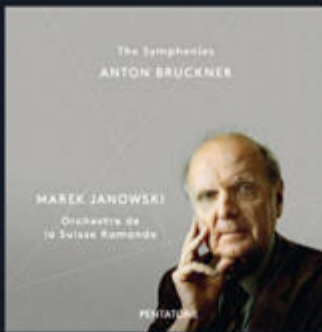
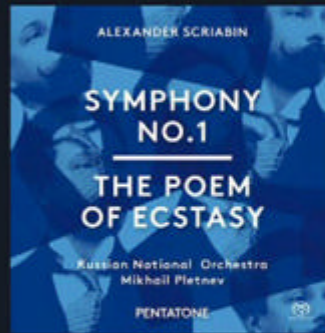
Having said that, the Carduccis' only seriously questionable decision is to allow the open strings to ring on after the hammered chords of the Eighth Quartet's fourth movement, which jars against the music's harmonic logic. Otherwise, while it may not offer a challenge to existing accounts, this well-recorded disc holds out much promise of things to come.

David Fanning

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Tansman

Romance. Violin Sonata No 2. Sonate quasi una fantasia. Sonatines – No 1; No 2. Fantaisie

Klaidi Sahatçı *vn* **Giorgio Koukl** *pf*

Naxos © 8 573127 (79' • DDD)



Putting one's finger on the personality of Alexandre Tansman (1897-1986) can be

bewildering and defeating. His core sensibility is elusive, his influences diverse and always shifting throughout his long creative life. So amid the many Tansman orchestral recordings of recent years, this chronologically wide-ranging disc of violin-and-piano works – starting in 1917 with music written before his fateful departure from his native Poland to Paris, and ending in 1963, still more than 20 years before his death – charts his progression in a consistent medium without requiring one to digest the massive sonorities that he sometimes favoured in larger-scale works.

Once past the earlier, parlour-ish works, which have a certain prettiness Tansman hung on to in various guises, the last four pieces on the disc are consistent indeed, not quite following similar templates but definitely returning to the similar modes of expression that were characteristic of French music of his time, namely Stravinsky's neo-classicism, Poulenc's cabaret rowdiness and Honegger's musically mechanised portrayal of the machine age. Time and again, Tansman loves to put violin and piano in related but separate simultaneous universes, alternately battling each other from a distance and trying to bridge their gaps. These influences seem to synthesise more in the later sonatas, not unlike Martinů, but the bigger point of Tansman's musical progression is how each succeeding sonata becomes more concentrated and precise in what it wants to say. Why the 1941 Sonatina No 2 and the 1952 *Fantaisie* don't turn up regularly on recital programmes is beyond me.

The performances here could hardly be better studied or more charismatic. Klaidi Sahatçı is the Zurich Tonhalle Orchestra's concertmaster and plays a fine-sounding Strad. Giorgio Koukl is old enough to have studied with many important figures from Tansman's time, such as Jacques Février, and knows to fuel this music with a kind of headlong momentum. No false sense of contemplation here. It's possible that minute study of Tansman may reveal more depths but this disc exists for more scintillating purposes.

David Patrick Stearns

C Wright

Four String Quartets

Fejes Quartet

Nimbus Alliance © NI6291 (78' • DDD)



The music of Christopher Wright (b1954) has just recently been making

headway in terms of recording, not least his combative Cello Concerto (Lyrita, 3/15). This new disc collates the four string quartets, which between them offer a viable overview of his output to date.

As the composer himself points out, the First Quartet (1980) owes a debt to Bartók, the Hungarian composer's Fourth and Fifth Quartets in particular, though the later quartets of Bloch are also a possible influence on a piece whose expressively fractured first movement and bitingly sardonic finale frame an *Adagio* of no mean eloquence. The Second Quartet (1995) pursues a not dissimilar focus, but here the dissonance is tempered by modal colouring which deepens the initial movement's sombre irony and the central *Lento*'s plangent introspection, though the finale – for all its bracing vigour – marginally fails to clinch the overall design with the affirmation intended.

The Third Quartet (2005) suggests the presence more of Shostakovich in its aggressive initial *Allegro* then a slow movement whose sustained emotional impact makes it the high point of all four works, and here the volatile finale makes a wholly plausible conclusion. The subtitle of the Fourth Quartet (2012), *Beacon Fell*, acknowledges its inspiration in the Pendle Hills of Lancashire, with a *Scherzo* deftly interposed between the robust opening movement and a *Lento* whose tonal opulence is effectively offset by the finale's tense decisiveness. Assured readings from the Fejes Quartet are enhanced by spacious yet immediate sound. Well worth investigating, with the thought that the diminishing timespan between each of these piece makes it likely that Wright will yet manage a further 'four quartets' across the latter part of his composing.

Richard Whitehouse

'La clarinette française'

A Bloch *Denneriana* **Debussy** *Première rapsodie* **Milhaud** *Scaramouche*, Op 165 **d** **Pierné** *Canzonetta*, Op 19 **Poulenc** *Clarinet Sonata* **Saint-Saëns** *Clarinet Sonata*, Op 167 **Lisa Shklyaver** *cl* **Jos Van Immerseel** *pf*
Zig-Zag Territoires © ZZT358 (62' • DDD)



This truly outstanding CD is not only ideally programmed and superbly played –

using a clarinet from 1830 and a Bechstein piano from 1870 – but most naturally recorded too. Every work here is a small-scale masterpiece and, throughout, this remarkable partnership is as of two artists playing as one.

The style of French clarinet-playing is less opulent, cooler than that usually provided by British players – as one is immediately aware in the enticing opening of the Poulenc Sonata. But it is not less beautiful. Moreover, the phrasing of Lisa Shklyaver and the subtle backing of Jos Van Immerseel is a pleasure in itself, as witness the gentle close of the *Allegretto* of the Saint-Saëns Sonata, and the hushed romantic opening of the Debussy *Rapsodie* where, when the clarinet's main soliloquy arrives, it is movingly beautiful.

André Bloch (no relation to Ernest) is little known but his jiggling *Denneriana* (a reference to the development of the clarinet) is catchy. So is Pierné's rippling *Canzonetta*, to which the players respond with a smile. Milhaud's three-movement *Scaramouche* is perhaps the best-known piece here, wittily, even humorously drawing on a host of piquant ideas, and it helps this illustrious duo close their recital memorably, with the central *Modéré* quite enchanting and the closing *Brazileira* making one want to tap one's feet.

Ivan March

'Italians in London!'

Carbonelli *Sonata* **X^a Castrucci** *Sonata*, Op 1 No 7 **a Geminiani** *Auld Bob Morrice*^a. *Sonata*, Op 1 No 6 **a Giardini** *Sonata*, Op 1 No 6 **a Matteis** *Ayres*, Book 2^a – three pieces **D Scarlatti** *Sonatas* – Kk14; Kk52; Kk145 **Veracini** *Sonata*, Op 1 No 9^a **Visconti** *Sonata* in C minor^a

^a**Simon Standage** *vn* **Friederike Chylek** *hpd*
Chandos Chaconne © CHAN0806 (74' • DDD)



There are so many violin sonatas by Italian composers from the first half of

the 18th century that mixed anthologies such as this can seem the most sensible way of giving them a chance. Focus here is provided by concentrating on some of the numerous Italian violinist-composers who made a living at one time or another in ever-receptive London. Starting with

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'The German counterpart of Red Priest': Spark bring flair to their new disc on Berlin Classics

The recorder has enjoyed its own particular renaissance over recent decades, in terms of both core music from the 16th and 17th centuries, and that plethora of new pieces which has transformed the instrument's profile. This selection comprises four discs that variously survey either end of the recorder's now extensive repertoire.

Johan Helmich Roman (1694-1758), the man and his music, remain something of an enigma. Sweden's first composer of stature (but of whom no image survives), his 12 Sonatas for flute and basso continuo were the only works published in his lifetime (1727, with a dedication to Queen Ulrika Eleanora the Younger, who supported the composer in his earlier years). Widely praised (not least by Telemann), their combining of formal rigour and unaffected expression with overtones of popular song and dance from the period helped secure them a hearing right over the social spectrum. This latter fact was partly explained by their suitability for recorder, to which Dan Laurin brings all his customary verve and eloquence in pieces whose emotional content is as unpredictable as the sequence of movements. His playing is enhanced by Paradiso Musicale – Jonas Nordberg's Baroque guitar combining with Anna Paradiso's harpsichord to striking effect, and with Mats Olofsson's cello a subtly insistent presence – in the

sympathetic ambience of Stocksund's Petrushkyrkan. Vol 2 of this survey can only be keenly awaited.

One of the crucial influences upon Roman's stylistic evolution was the instrumental music of the Neapolitan school in terms of rhythmic poise and agility. He may well have met **Leonardo Leo** (1694-1744) during his brief sojourn in Naples in the mid-1730s, an exact contemporary whose Seven Sonatas for flute and basso continuo were likely written just beforehand while until recently languishing unpublished in New York Public Library. As realised by Ensemble Barocco di Napoli, these pieces exude charm and incisiveness in equal measure – again with a discernible basis in the popular music from this period – and if less distinctive than those by Roman, their elegant restrained appeal is undoubted. Tommaso Rossi's lithe recorder-playing is abetted by Ugo di Giovanni's archlute and Marco Vitali's cello, with Raffaele di Donna's bass recorder insinuating itself into the texture as tellingly as Patrizia Varone's harpsichord elsewhere. The sound, courtesy of two spacious church acoustics in Naples, ensures clarity and definition – making this acquaintance with Leo's rediscovered music a pleasurable one.

Few countries can rival Denmark when it comes to revitalising the contemporary recorder repertoire. From the current crop of composers, **Mogens Christensen** (b1955) is among the most significant –

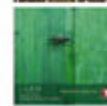
as attested by 'Busy Bees and Birds', in which Pernille Petersen is a dedicated exponent. She and accordionist Bjarke Mogensen find a heady symbiosis in the duo *Feuerspiegel*, then she conveys an ethereal detachment in the seasonal traversal of *Nocturnal Birds* and a limpid poise in the brief yet engaging *Arie(s)*. She is joined by guitarist Per Pålsson for the *Dansebagateller* that constitutes an unlikely 'theme and variations' in which each piece is a variation on its predecessor – climaxing in the mesmeric *tour de force* of the sixth bagatelle. The final piece also gives this disc its title, Petersen joined here by the Messer Quartet in a compact but eventful 'concerto' where the sound of bees mutates into that of birds thanks to a little electronic assistance. It ends an absorbing disc that takes the recorder to new limits.

The final release centres on a group that might well be the German counterpart of Red Priest, **Spark** having similar flair as regards their attire and repertoire. Their latest disc, 'Wild Territories', is a collection of new pieces and transcriptions, centred round the six pithy and evocative pieces (spread across this recital) of *From Songs in Other Words* by Kamran Ince. Less interesting, not least because they rather outstay their welcome, are five grittily sub-minimalist pieces by Chiel Meijering (such as *Beyoncé*, which could hardly be construed as homage to the singer in question); while two arrangements of concerto finales by Vivaldi and Telemann are surely more engaging with a visual component. The highlight is *Alpha Dog*, a 'concerto' in which Kenji Bunch – whose crossover take on minimalist traits is invariably arresting – challenges the ensemble to feats of virtuosity that they meet head-on. The increasingly frenetic workout of Johannes Motschmann's *Encore* sends the group spiralling into infinity: the only logical conclusion for this avowedly OTT release. **G**

THE RECORDINGS



Roman Flute Sonatas
Laurin; Paradiso Musicale
BIS (P) BIS2105



Leo Recorder Sonatas
Rossi; Ens Barocco di Napoli
Stradivarius (P) STR33969



Christensen 'Busy Bees and Birds'
Petersen; Messer Qt
Dacapo (P) 8 226543



Various Cpsrs 'Wild Territories'
Spark
Berlin Classics (P) 0300640BC

Nicola Matteis, who first dazzled English audiences in the 1670s, it ranges on through Geminiani, Visconti and Carbonelli (who as pupils of Corelli were bound to go down well in England), takes in Veracini and the leader of Handel's opera orchestra Castrucci (both individuals thought by Englishmen at the time to have been at least a little mad), and ends with Giardini, brilliant leader of the orchestra at the King's Theatre (and with Abel and JC Bach one of the apostles of the *galant* style in London). Matteis, Geminiani and Veracini are already moderately well represented in the catalogue, the others less so, and this disc claims six premiere recordings.

With the exception of Geminiani's *Auld Bob Morrice*, nothing here seems to have been touched by any particular kind of Britishness unless it be in an overall tendency towards elegance and restraint; what quirks there are are mild ones. All this finds a match in the playing of Simon Standage, a veteran of the beginnings of British period performance whose essentially delicate sound is nourished by easy bowing and sweet but unobtrusive vibrato. Showiness is not for him and he seems happier when letting this music's clean lines speak for themselves, with just

a little nurturing, than in passages of more extrovert or high-lying virtuosity, where a hint of discomfort sometimes creeps in. Friederike Chylek likewise eschews flashy continuo in favour of something more modestly functional, though her renderings of three Scarlatti sonatas are little pockets of controlled energy. **Lindsay Kemp**

'Moments of Youth'

JS Bach Solo Cello Suite No 3, BWV1009

Cassadó Requiebro Fauré Elégie, Op 24

Haydn Cello Concerto No 2 - Adagio Paganini

Caprice No 9, 'Hunt' Piazzolla Le Grand Tango

Schumann Fantasiestücke, Op 73

Brendan Goh vc Reinhard Schobesberger pf

Ars Produktion © ARS38 752 (61) • DDD/DSD



This is Singaporean cellist Brendan Goh's second recording (the first was a charity CD),

and the title presumably refers to the player's age (he was born in 1999), rather than that of the composers featured – and there is no thematic connection of youth in the works themselves.

That Goh is phenomenally gifted is undeniable, as his navigation through the

technical challenges of Bach's Third Suite and Paganini's *Hunt* Caprice (in Luigi Silva's vibrant transcription) provides ready confirmation. If his rendition of Fauré's *Elégie* wears its heart on its sleeve a touch too blatantly, his account of the *Adagio* of Haydn's D major Concerto is a lyrical delight, poised yet quietly rich in expression.

A word here for Reinhard Schobesberger's beautifully balanced accompaniments, which provide firm yet subtle support, never overwhelming the soloist, as averred in the performances of Gaspar Cassadó's virtuoso *Requiebro* (1934, roughly translated as 'flirtation' or 'memories') or Schumann's *Fantasiestücke*, a staple of almost every portrait disc of aspiring star cellists.

Goh is not quite at stellar level yet. Despite the fluency of his Bach and Schumann, there is a coolness and lack of depth to his playing; this will improve with experience. There are intonational problems, too, in Piazzolla's fiercely difficult *Le Grand Tango* (1982, for Rostropovich), which has the fullest writing for both instruments – though both players get the swing of the music well enough. In short, then, a highly impressive disc, full of promise – to be fulfilled. **Guy Rickards**



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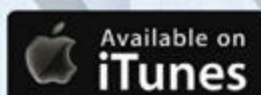
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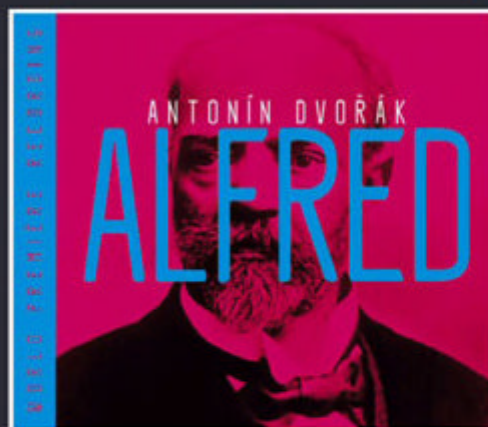
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Prokofiev Violin Sonata No 1
Maria Milstein *vn* **Hanna Shybayeva** *pf*
 Cobra Ⓢ COBRA0045 (67' • DDD)



Linking these three violin sonatas under the title 'Sounds of War' produces a powerful recital. Each work caused its composer uncharacteristic difficulty, Janáček taking from 1914 to 1921 with his Sonata, Poulenc from 1943 until 1949 with his, while still remaining unsatisfied. Prokofiev needed from 1938 to 1946 for a work that seems also to have reflected the crushing fist of Stalinism. All three make considerable emotional as well as technical demands, and Milstein and Shybayeva have clearly studied them in depth.

Janáček's Sonata is an enigmatic work, with the lyrical 'Ballada' movement steadily undermined as it progresses to its forlorn conclusion; this is movingly handled, as is the balance between serenity and tension in the *Allegretto*, and the touching conclusion, with beautiful interplay between instruments throughout. Poulenc's Sonata begins furiously at maximum tension, then draws clear into a touchingly aloof quality for the grieving Intermezzo, music in which Poulenc mourned the death of his friend the poet Lorca. This is one of the most moving pieces he ever wrote, and the finale, with its last despairing cry, is surely for all Poulenc's doubts the fitting conclusion to one of his strongest works.

Prokofiev's First Sonata, considerably the longest of the three, is also an eloquent work, demanding some highly original effects for its expression, as when in the *Andante* the piano is set in extreme treble and bass with the muted violin lamenting in the middle. There are further difficulties of balance and expression with the phrase perhaps central to the work, when in Prokofiev's own words the violin sounds 'like the wind in a graveyard'. If each sonata presented its composer with problems, there are also many for the performers. These are thoughtful, powerful interpretations. **John Warrack**

'Tintomara'

Damase Trio^a **Maier** Slipstream^b **J-F Michel**
 Eastwind^c **Padding** One Trumpet^d **Purcell**
 Sound the trumpet^e. My dearest, my fairest^e.
 Hark, how the songsters of the grove^e **Rabe**
 Tintomara^f **Ravel** Piano Trio - Passacaille^g
 acdef **Wim Van Hasselt** *tp* ^{abcef} **Jörgen van Rijen** *trbn*
^eInès d'Avena, ^gReine-Marie Verhagen *recs*

^a**Benedikt Enzler** *vc* ^{ag}**Alla Libo** *pf* ^e**Mike Fentross**
gtr/theo ^c**brass ensemble** / **Pierre Volders**
 Channel Classics Ⓢ CCSSA36315
 (71' • DDD/DSD)



Tintomara is a character from 18th-century Swedish literature who, if not exactly Janus-like, has a dichotomous purpose in projecting the essence and ambiguity of male and female traits. Such is the conceit lying at the heart of Folke Rabe's short but witty duo of this name for trumpet and trombone. But, fear not, this disc fires this single conceptual shot only to kindle the imagination as to how two 'heavy' brass instruments – performed by two exceptional musicians from the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, Amsterdam – can play gentle havoc with expectation.

There is indeed little that these players cannot project in terms of multifaceted lyricism, colour and dramatic presence, and this is matched by the very best in modern brass programming. Starting from the seemingly innocuous but deft flightiness of three Purcell arrangements (delivered with nonchalant stylishness and balance alongside delicate theorbo and recorders), Wim Van Hasselt and Jorgen van Rijen appear to find a golden thread to weave through remarkably diverse musical traditions.

How we shift so easily from Rabe to the extensive Parisian musings of Jean-Michel Damase with mellifluous élan is down to the age-old of tactic of preparation, tension and resolution – and the programming moves in large waves on this broad ideal. Damase's generic conservatoire campus fare slightly overstates its welcome but skilfully sets up the more challenging works with the necessary comfort to hold the listener through Martijn Padding's dense encyclopedia of trumpeting wizardry.

The same process is undertaken in the final triptych, where a newly claimed transformation of Ravel's *Passacaille* from the Piano Trio, sounding wonderfully idiomatic, leads into the devastatingly effective *Slipstream* by Florian Magnus Maier – a creative process of electronic recycling where van Rijen uses and re-uses material he's just played to accompany himself as he proceeds. This taut crossover 'ensemble' piece created by a solo player fits like a glove into the traditional brass finale, *Eastwind*, which is nothing short of a hoot. All the facets of this project are outstanding and it starts with a dazzling sound. **Jonathan Freeman-Attwood**

IN THE STUDIO

An inside view of who's before the mics and what they're recording

• Opera Rara double

Sir Mark Elder and the Hallé are in the studio this month for two major projects for Opera Rara. Charles Gounod's 1860 *opéra comique* *La colombe*, with a cast including Erin Morley and Javier Camarena, is due for release in November. Donizetti's *Le duc d'Albe*, recorded using the new critical edition of the score with singers Laurent Naouri, Angela Meade and Michael Spyres, will be released next spring.

• Song cycles continue

Austrian Baritone **Florian Boesch** (pictured) has recorded another instalment of his Schubert series for Onyx with Malcolm Martineau: a disc of mixed Lieder to be released next May. For Nimbus, meanwhile, soprano **Charlotte de Rothschild** records a second volume of Schumann Lieder this month, with Adrian Farmer as pianist.



• Hyperion's pianists

Piers Lane has recorded works by Alfred Hill and George Frederick Boyle with the Adelaide Symphony Orchestra under Johannes Fritzsche, to be released as part of the label's Romantic Piano Concerto series next spring. **Stephen Hough** returns to the studio this month to record works by Debussy, including *Estantes*.

• Taverner in Wells

Wells Cathedral Choir has been recording works by Taverner in their Somerset home for an album to be released on Signum in 2016.

• Karabits's Prokofiev

Kirill Karabits and the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra's Prokofiev cycle on Onyx continues apace: they recorded the 1947 version of the Fourth Symphony plus the Sixth in the Lighthouse, Poole in May for the fourth volume of their ongoing cycle, due for release in November.

Gundula Janowitz

The soprano Elizabeth Watts pays tribute to a fellow singer who made a huge impact on her as a teenager and whose pure, silvery voice opened her ears to a whole new repertoire

In my well-thumbed, cherished 2001 *Gramophone Good CD Guide*, purchased using a small staff discount and a chunk of my hard-earned wages during my time at the sadly now defunct Sheffield Virgin Megastore, Gundula Janowitz (b1937) amasses a rather impressive number of entries.

Beethoven's Ninth in the complete Karajan set; Mozart arias (her first solo recital disc from 1967); *Carmina Burana* (alluring and fey); *Ariadne auf Naxos*; *Lobengrin*; *Parsifal* (a luxury Flower Maiden); *Der Freischütz* and, of course, Richard Strauss's *Four Last Songs*, the disc she is perhaps

best known for. I would, myself, have to include her totemic recordings of Schubert Lieder to that list (awarded the Deutscher Schallplattenpreis, now the ECHO Klassik Award), and

there are indeed many other wonderful recordings. The reviews of these discs variously describe her 'purity of tone and silken vocal line', 'refinement of style', and that adjective possibly never ascribed so much to one singer: 'golden'. It is this great honesty, vulnerability and beauty in her sound, allied to a deep, noble sense of musicality, that makes me a huge fan. The luminosity and truth in her lustrous sound are, for me, unparalleled.

It was, perhaps unsurprisingly, the glory of her Strauss that first introduced me to this remarkable singer. A friend at university had played me the *Four Last Songs* by another singer and I told my mum I had to have a CD of the piece. With my birthday coming up, she went to Prelude Records in Norwich and asked which recording they would recommend.

She came away with two, thus, in an instant, converting me into a geeky type of record buyer for posterity. I enjoyed Lisa Della Casa's version, but Janowitz had me hooked. I played the CD incessantly, so moved was I by her singing, its tenderness and her genuine and deep commitment to the harmonic line. Add this to one of the best horn solos ever recorded and it's a really powerful 20 minutes. This CD should be available on prescription.

As I added to my CD collection during my time at the record shop, judiciously

using my Christmas bonus and snaffling any newly reduced items before any proper customers could, anything with Janowitz was a priority. I learned that this was what an artist was: a singer using her technique to create a beautiful sound, yet always subservient to the music, employing it and a great imagination to make incarnate glorious fantasies.

How did this great artist come into being? Born in Berlin in 1937, Janowitz studied in Graz and made her debut at the Vienna State Opera in 1960 in the role of Barbarina in *Le nozze di Figaro*. She had auditioned for Herbert von

Karajan in 1959, when he told her: 'If you promise to work hard I will take you out into the world.' They clearly both stuck to the bargain and Janowitz was a member of the ensemble at the theatre

throughout her career. And what a career it was. Early roles at the Staatsoper included Pamina, Mimì and Purcell's Dido, followed by the Empress in *Die Frau ohne Schatten*. Out of Vienna, notable debuts were Bayreuth (1960), Aix-en-Provence (1963) as Pamina (a role she would record under Klemperer the following year), Glyndebourne (1964) as Ilia, the Metropolitan Opera (1967) as Sieglinde and Covent Garden (1976) as Donna Anna. At Salzburg between 1963 and 1981 she sang Donna Anna, Countess Almaviva, Fiordiligi, the Marschallin and Ariadne. She would also appear during her career at the Opéra de Paris (for its reopening in 1973), Frankfurt, Hamburg, Munich, Berlin and La Scala.

Gramophone's James Jolly once asked her what her favourite roles were. 'The three As,' she replied, meaning: Donna Anna

(a role she sadly never recorded commercially), Agathe and Arabella. Her collaboration with Karajan lasted until 1979 when, after a performance of Brahms's *A German Requiem* at the Salzburg Easter Festival, he simply kissed her hand and said farewell. That was it. Janowitz described this as typical behaviour. 'Karajan was always interested in the latest things: autos, recording technology – singers. That's how he was,' she explained in an interview in *Opernwelt* magazine, adding, 'Next to my parents, he is the person

'I played the CD incessantly, so moved was I by her singing, its tenderness and her commitment to the harmonic line'

DEFINING MOMENTS

• 1960 – *First appearance in Vienna*

Makes her debut at the State Opera as Barbarina after auditioning for Karajan the previous year

• 1964 – *Appears alongside a youthful Pavarotti in Mozart*

Glyndebourne debut as Ilia in *Idomeneo* with another future star

• 1967 – *US debut in Wagner's Die Walküre under Karajan*

First appearance at the Metropolitan Opera as Sieglinde

• 1974 – *A classic recording is made*

Records Richard Strauss's *Four Last Songs* in Berlin with Karajan

• 1979 – *The long musical relationship with Karajan ends*

Last performance with Karajan: Brahms's *A German Requiem* at Salzburg Easter Festival

• 1990 – *Her last stage performance, back where she started*

Farewell at the Vienna State Opera as Richard Strauss's Ariadne



PHOTOGRAPHY: ULLSTEIN BILD/LEBRECHT MUSIC & ARTS

to whom I owe the most thanks. I was his child; with him, I would have trusted myself to sing anything.' Her last operatic appearance in 1990 was as Ariadne (a role she'd also recorded), fittingly at the Vienna Staatsoper.

It was not, however, just as an opera singer that her career flourished. Her wide and varied discography includes Bach's *St Matthew Passion*, Mass in B minor and *Christmas Oratorio*, Handel's *Messiah* and *Judas Maccabaeus*, Beethoven's two Masses, Brahms's *A German Requiem* and Lieder, Haydn's *The Creation* and *The Seasons*, Hindemith's

Das Marienleben, Mendelssohn's *St Paul*, Mozart's Requiem, Pergolesi's *Stabat mater*, Schoenberg's *Gurrelieder* and Verdi's Requiem. There must be few singers who can have triumphed

in such varied repertoire. And, of course, there is the Strauss *Four Last Songs*. It may not be to everyone's taste but for the beautiful use of vocal colour it surely cannot be beaten. Perhaps Janowitz is a bit of a 'marmite' singer – you either love her or you hate her – but I love her and my life is enriched for having encountered her wonderful voice. **G**

► To read Gramophone's review of Mahler 4 with the Netherlands PO and Elizabeth Watts, turn to page 31

THE ESSENTIAL RECORDING



R Strauss
Four Last Songs
Gundula Janowitz;
BPO / Herbert
von Karajan
DG (M)
447 422-2GOR
(12/74)

Instrumental



Stephen Plaistow listens to Hough's Grieg Lyric Pieces:

'Stephen Hough is up there with the best; may we never take his excellence for granted'

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 67**



Jeremy Nicholas reviews a set of historic Sapellnikoff transfers:

'I love the pacing, the tempo relationships, his effortless fluency and (easily discernible) resonant, singing tone'

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 71**

CPE Bach

'Solo Keyboard Music, Vol 29'

Sonatas: Wq52 - No 4 H37; No 5 H163; No 6 H129; Wq65 - No 47 H248; No 49 H298

Miklós Spányi *clav*

BIS Ⓢ BIS2046 (76' • DDD)

CPE Bach

'Sense and Sensibility'

Sonatas - Wq55 No 5 H243; Wq57 No 4 H208; Wq57 No 6 H173; Wq59 No 1 H281. Fantasias, Wq59 - No 5 H279; No 6 H284. Rondo, Wq57 No 3 H271

Riccardo Cecchetti *fp*

Challenge Classics Ⓢ CC72666 (68' • DDD)



Miklós Spányi has probably done more than anyone alive to promote CPE Bach's waywardly inspired keyboard music, sometimes bizarre, even frustrating (so many tunes promised but not quite delivered), but never less than fascinating. With Vol 29 of his BIS *intégrale* he alights on three of the unappetisingly titled *Zweite Fortsetzung* ('second sequel') Sonatas, Wq52, plus two much later sonatas.

As on previous volumes, the powerful, percussive resonance of his chosen clavichord (a modern copy of a 1785 instrument by Gottfried Joseph Horn) seems amplified by the resonant acoustic. I'd be intrigued to hear how it sounds live. Spányi is, as ever, a fastidious player, keenly attuned to Bach's particular brand of *Empfindsamkeit*, especially in the quasi-improvisatory slow movements. The soulful *Andante* of the late C minor Sonata, Wq65/49, gains from the clavichord's quivering *Bebung*, an effect impossible to obtain on the harpsichord or piano.

Doubts tend to arise in the faster movements, where Spányi favours slowish tempi and emphasises the discontinuities and fragmentations in Bach's discourse, at the expense of linear flow. It's a fine balance, of course. But turn to pianists

Danny Driver (Hyperion, 7/10) or Ana-Marija Markovina, in her magnificent complete CPE survey (Hänssler, 3/15), and you'll hear Bachian 'sensibility' combined with fantasy, playfulness and, where apt, devil-may-care brilliance. In the C minor Sonata's fretful *moto perpetuo* finale Spányi sounds almost didactic alongside Markovina's impulsive surge and sweep; and in his determination to stress Bach's rhetorical quirks, he seems to forget that the finale of the F sharp minor Sonata, Wq52/4, is *Allegro assai*. Driver and Markovina both bring out the fire as well as the bizarrerie.

If you like your CPE on the fortepiano, Riccardo Cecchetti offers a selection of sonatas and fantasias from CPE's *Kenner und Liebhaber* sets, playing on a notably rich-sounding restored instrument from the 1780s. Provisos, again, centre on some controversially deliberate tempi: say, in the outer movements of the D minor Sonata, Wq57/4, where he pulls the music back at the slightest provocation, or the opening of the E minor, Wq59/1, which you'd never guess was marked *Presto*. But Cecchetti understands Bach's intensely personal rhetoric in the two fantasias, where the music so often resembles heightened speech. Here and in slow movements, he makes telling use of the fortepiano's veiled *sordino*.

The *sordino* also enhances the wistful tenderness of the *Andantino* finales of Wq57/6 and 59/1, where Cecchetti's inwardness and delicate timing and shaping of cadences epitomise all that is best in his thoughtful performances.

Richard Wigmore

JS Bach

Solo Violin Sonatas and Partitas, BWV1001-1006

Claudia Schaer *vn*

Rivulet Ⓢ 875531 009729 (138' • DDD)



There is delicate ornamentation present here (and not Baroque-specific

ornamentation) that is so sparingly used that one would be forgiven for thinking that Schaer had chosen to use none at all as a matter of policy. So when a delicate turn or appoggiatura appears – as it does to particularly appealing effect in the E major Third Partita – it lifts the music off its feet and into a dance in a way that is very striking. The strengths of this performance are all also its subtleties, in fact, and as such the light tone and tentative nature of some of its phrasing may not be for those with clear ideas of how they like their Bach solo violin music.

There are frequent points where Schaer's intelligent tracking of the multifarious phrases within phrases of all these movements is so deliberate that it can interfere with the line to an extent just noticeable enough to undermine one's confidence in the actual melody. That is not to say there is not enough scaffolding under either her tone or phrasing (which is more than enough to support the carding-out of the chords of the C major Third Sonata's *Adagio*, for instance), but her very intellectual approach can occasionally tip into a presentation that is more mechanical than it is emotional. The Chaconne of the D minor Second Partita, then, as the most important movement of all these pieces, is unsurprisingly the most obvious casualty of this: the massiveness of its musical stature left the most conspicuously unfulfilled by a performance too ginger and tentative.

Caroline Gill

JS Bach

Solo Cello Suites, BWV1007-1012

David Watkin *vc*

Resonus Ⓢ RES10147 (145' • DDD)



As with so much mainstream repertoire, the catalogue is so full of recordings – good and bad – that there often has to be some form of abstract justification to qualify any further additions. David Watkin's profound



'Warm, expansive, generous and friendly': David Watkin offers an outstanding new account of the Bach Cello Suites on Resonus

musicianship, though, is more than enough to accelerate this recording of Bach's Cello Suites to the top of the tiny league of 'definitive' recordings, beyond the infinitesimal care of Ditta Rohmann (Hungaroton, 5/14, 11/14), the meticulous intellectualism of Anner Bylsma (Sony, 7/81, 1/93) or even the refined warmth of the benchmark Fournier performances (Archiv, 3/89): all encapsulate the vital elements of these works but none succeeds completely in covering them all.

Watkin plays the first five suites on a cello by Francesco Ruggieri – a luthier contemporary of Bach's whose instruments are famed for their warmth of tone – and the sixth on a rare five-string cello by the Amati brothers of the same period. But the extraordinarily resonant sound he makes is probably less to do with the instruments than with the playing itself, which is warm, expansive, generous and friendly. That is not to say that this performance is not of the highest level intellectually and technically: it is, and largely because of its appreciation of these suites as not just dances but discourses almost verbal in their directness. It is as if all the work that Watkin has ever done on these pieces has been absorbed absolutely and then reproduced in a performance that is able

to be completely original in its voice at the same time as never producing a phrase that jars in its subtlety, or presents an ego that overarches the music.

That generosity of artistry directly results in some movements that are not only opened up to the listener as the masterworks they are but as paeans of heart-cracking joy. If you only buy this disc for the Prelude of the G major Suite, for exactly that reason, it will be money well spent.

Caroline Gill

JS Bach

Six French Suites, BWV812-817.

Fantasias and Fugues – 'Chromatic', BWV903, BWV904 (two recordings)

Sergey Schepkin *pf*

Steinway & Sons ® ② STNS30046 (113' • DDD)



Writing in his accompanying essay, Russian-American pianist Sergey

Schepkin leaves you in no doubt why Bach is at the heart of his repertoire. And his performances of the six *French Suites*, two differing takes on the A minor Fantasia and

Fugue and the *Chromatic* Fantasia and Fugue are of an exemplary precision and lucidity. Using the Bärenreiter edition of the Suites, his playing is at first relatively austere, allowing for rich embellishments on the repeats. Again, he argues sensibly that to place graceful, intimate if 'sometimes humorous Minuets' after fast-paced and exhilarating Gigue, as in some editions, savours of anti-climax.

Such telling scholarship is complemented by playing devoid of egocentricity, elaborate gesturing and agogic accentuation, in which everything is made seamless and natural, though with no loss of character. Bach is always allowed his own voice, a far cry from the justly celebrated Bach of Gould or Tureck, where touches of genius are qualified by eccentricity (Gould) and pedantry (Tureck).

Schepkin is gentle and heart-warming in the Second Suite's Allemande, lively but unforced in the Courante. There is a special sense of joyousness in the Fifth Suite, where in the final Gigue his sparkle declares his enviable technique, though one never on display for its own sake. Try the Courante from the Sixth Suite for an example of Schepkin's effortless-sounding command or the Gavotte for an irresistibly

perky rhythmic spring.

Then, he is suitably audacious and improvisatory in the *Chromatic Fantasia* and Fugue, music beloved by virtuoso pianists not normally attuned to Bach. And if he cannot erase memories of the glories offered by Edwin Fischer and most of all Kempff (his live BBC Legends performance – 2/01), his performance is never less than arresting. Steinway & Sons has done Schepkin proud, crowning his special accomplishment with excellent sound.

Bryce Morrison

Beethoven

Piano Sonatas – No 5, Op 10 No 1; No 6, Op 10 No 2; No 7, Op 10 No 3; No 21, 'Waldstein', Op 53; No 22, Op 54; No 23, 'Appassionata', Op 57

Paavali Jumppanen *pf*

Ondine Ⓟ ② ODE1268-2D (116' • DDD)



It's not certain if Paavali Jumppanen's second double-CD release devoted to

Beethoven sonatas signifies a cycle in the works, yet his best playing no doubt commands attention. His rhythmically astute yet flexible fingerwork, lean yet well-modulated sonority and stylish intelligence serve all three Op 10 Sonatas as well as the catalogue's reference versions. His opening-movement tempo for the C minor (Op 10 No 1) may not quite be the *Molto allegro* Beethoven had in mind, yet subtle inflections such as the slight rushing of certain triplet figures generate tension and sweep. The finale, however, not only takes the composer's all-but-impossible *Prestissimo* at face value but betrays no effort on the pianist's part.

Jumppanen takes uncommon care to clarify and characterise the detached and *legato* phrase groupings in Op 10 No 2's central movement, while the rollicking finale is steady and buoyant without needing to drive home its motoric point. Many pianists sacrifice punctuation for speed in Op 10 No 3's opening *Presto* but not Jumppanen, who voices the rapid broken octaves and sixths for maximum polyphonic clarity. Melody and accompaniment play equal expressive roles in the pianist's songfully sad *Largo e mesto*, so different from Arrau's slower, weightier tragedy. A few arch phrase taperings aside, the Minuet flows with grace, while the Rondo finale's astutely timed runs and rests are right on the money.

The *Waldstein* holds much to admire, such as the first movement's crystal-clear left-hand articulation and the pianist's uncompromising observance of the Rondo's controversial long pedal markings. Yet I miss the overall sense of abandon and exultation that such disparate pianists as Schnabel, Solomon and Pollini achieve here. Jumppanen begins Op 54's toccata-like finale gingerly, gradually accelerating to a livelier tempo. His organic drive and dynamism keep the *Appassionata's Allegro assai* vibrantly afloat. The *Andante con moto* seamlessly unfolds by virtue of the pianist's assiduous tempo relationships between variations. By the conclusion of Jumppanen's efficient, regulation-brand finale he lets go for the *Presto* coda. He even elongates the chords in its first two measures à la Sviatoslav Richter, if not elsewhere. The pianist's insightful booklet-notes and Ondine's state-of-the-art sound deserve more than a token mention.

Jed Distler

Chopin

'Autour des Ballades'

Andante spianato and *Grande Polonaise*, Op 22. Four Ballades. Etude, Op 10 No 3. Fantaisie-Impromptu, Op 66. Nocturnes – No 4, Op 15 No 1; No 13, Op 48 No 1. Waltz No 3, Op 34 No 2

Kotaro Fukuma *pf*

Editions Hortus Ⓟ HORTUS118 (76' • DDD)



Kotaro Fukuma is a masterly and refined young pianist who, after the virtuoso challenges of Albéniz (*Iberia*, 10/12) and Balakirev (*Islamey*, 3/15), takes on the more subtle and elusive challenge of Chopin, interweaving the four Ballades with shorter works.

Fukuma's performances invite a mixed response: able at one level but circumscribed at another. There is something of the studio in the *Fantaisie-Impromptu* where, while one welcomes his lack of exaggeration or idiosyncrasy, there is a lack of the sort of personal touch that can make familiar pages spring into renewed life. In the First Ballade, too, an element of caution mitigates against a full recreative blaze, while the Op 22 Polonaise (after a finely poised *Andante spianato*) lacks the joyful rhythmic resilience of Rubinstein (a cruel comparison) or, indeed, of 22-year-old Benjamin Grosvenor. The Second Ballade's storms are given with exceptional brilliance but there is a lack of lyrical intensity in the C minor Nocturne, with its daringly original cannonade of octaves.

Hortus's sound lacks the range of the finest recordings and, for all their many qualities, Fukuma's Chopin Ballades hardly stand comparison with recordings by Zimerman and Perahia, with their fully rather than partially realised readings.

Bryce Morrison

Andante spianato – selected comparison:

Grosvenor (9/14) (DECC) 478 5334DH

Ballades – selected comparisons:

Zimerman (10/88) (DG) 423 090-2GH

Perahia (12/94^R, 11/14) (SONY) 88843 06243-2

Glass

Glassworks – opening. The Truman Show – Truman Sleeps (short version). The Hours (arr Riesman). How Now. The Olympian – Lighting of the Torch. Mad Rush. Wichita Vortex Sutra. Metamorphosis I-V. Mishima – closing (arr Riesman)

Valentina Lisitsa *pf*

Decca Ⓟ ② 478 8079DH2 (151' • DDD)



Valentina Lisitsa's emotionally charged and technically accomplished

renditions of Chopin, Schumann and Rachmaninov et al have proved to be popular among audiences who access classical music via social media. However, the Ukrainian-born pianist's decision to explore more recent repertoire by releasing a recording of Michael Nyman's music last year (7/14) was on the whole less convincing.

This two-disc collection of music by Philip Glass is not without its own idiosyncrasies and inconsistencies but certainly shows off Lisitsa in a more positive light. As with Nyman, she again draws largely from the composer's film-music back catalogue, and the most impressive moments are heard in her performance of Glass's suite from *The Hours* and in pieces recycled from soundtracks that include *The Truman Show* and *The Olympian*. In 'The Poet Acts' from *The Hours*, Lisitsa perfectly balances the upper part's unsettling ebb and flow against a deep and resonant bass-line. 'Dead Things' and 'Tearing Herself Away', also from *The Hours*, which open the second disc, are beautifully judged. Glass has rarely been played with as much care shown to the subtle nuances of his minimalist style and aesthetic.

Lisitsa is less convincing, however, when taken out of the relative comfort zone of film cues. The inclusion of Glass's early, experimental and highly repetitive *How Now*, 30 minutes long and inexplicably



'May we never take his excellence for granted': Stephen Hough, who offers a selection of Grieg's *Lyric Pieces* on his latest disc for Hyperion

sandwiched between tracks from *The Hours*, is at best ill-advised: the music reduced to little more than a Czerny-style exercise. Her *Metamorphosis* cycle lacks the momentum and drive of recent interpretations by Lisa Moore (OMM, 5/15) and Sally Whitwell (ABC, A/14), too, but one cannot deny the inherent musicality that lies at the heart of Lisitsa's playing. If nothing else, she proves here that Glass's music can sound stunning when given a more self-consciously Romantic treatment.

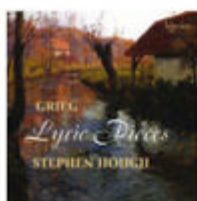
Pwyll ap Siôn

Grieg

Lyric Pieces - Arietta, Op 12 No 1; Berceuse, Op 38 No 1; Elegy, Op 38 No 6; Six Lyric Pieces, Op 43; Valse-Impromptu, Op 47 No 1; Melody, Op 47 No 3; Elegy, Op 47 No 7; March of the Trolls, Op 54 No 3; Nocturne, Op 54 No 4; Bell-Ringing, Op 54 No 6; Homesickness, Op 57 No 6; Sylph, Op 62 No 1; From Early Years, Op 65 No 1; Salon, Op 65 No 4; Wedding Day at Troldhaugen, Op 65 No 6; Sailors' Song, Op 68 No 2; At Your Feet, Op 68 No 3; At the Cradle, Op 68 No 5; Summer's Eve, Op 71 No 2; Puck, Op 71 No 3; Remembrances, Op 71 No 7; Homeward, Op 62 No 6

Stephen Hough *pf*

Hyperion © CDA68070 (73' • DDD)



Grieg may not be in the pantheon with the greatest but his freshness of invention continues to give his music a classic quality. He was a born lyricist and his piano pieces and songs established him as a master, not just a miniaturist, unfailingly strong, original and sensitive in their harmonic language. They are equally strong in refinement of rhythm as well. Schumann rather than Mendelssohn was godfather to the 10 volumes of *Lyric Pieces*, which carry on Schumann's tradition of the 'characteristic' piece whose title so often conceals an intimate experience.

Stephen Hough's selection of 27 is chronological, beginning with the 'Arietta' from Book 1 (1867) and ending with Grieg's recollection of it in 'Remembrances' ('Efterklang') in Book 10 (1901). The pieces form a poetic piano diary running through his life. There are banalities, here and there, but the boldness and tenderness of the melodic ideas are paramount. You can play the CD through as a recital, compiled as it is with taste and enough concern for variety. Better though

to make shorter sequences of the tracks and be drawn in more intently to Hough's artistry and the cunning with which Grieg took so many choice features of Liszt's and Wagner's harmony, compressing them into small spaces and making them his own. He hated his student years in Leipzig and made sure his music after that would stay fresh and northern, and bang up to date.

The CD sits nicely alongside such classic selections as Emil Gilels's of 1974 (DG, 3/75, 2/97) and Leif Ove Andsnes's of 24 numbers played on Grieg's own 1892 Steinway (EMI, 4/02). There is also Walter Gieseking from way back (EMI, 4/99): high-class sight-reading, one might say, but far from negligible. If an *intégrale* of all 66 is your goal (it would never be mine) there is Gerhard Oppitz (RCA, 4/94) and the respected Eva Knardahl (BIS, 11/87, 8/88). A tribute here is also surely due to Peter Katin, who died recently and did much for the *Lyric Pieces* in this country before anyone bothered with them greatly. The wonders of YouTube had me hooked on sampling the composer's own piano rolls as well as some delectable examples of Sviatoslav Richter.

Stephen Hough is up there with the best; may we never take his excellence for granted. In weight of expression he is often

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lighter than the great Russians, Gilels making all 20 that he plays so personal whereas Hough's detachment – it's a small thing – is also telling in its way, the detail and overview consistently in balance. His virtuosity, polish, control of nuance and a huge range of dynamics are lovely to have. The piano is a Yamaha, for a change, a high-end product which sometimes shouted a bit, I thought, in *fortissimo*, and it's a fine recording made just a year ago at St George's, Brandon Hill. **Stephen Plaistow**

Kanno

'Light, Water, Raindow...'

The Remains of the Light III, 'Angel's Ladder'.

A Particle of Light. A Particle of Water. A Particle of Rainbow. Lunar Rainbow. Prelude for Angel

Noriko Ogawa *pf*

BIS (F) BIS2075 (72' • DDD/DSD)



There's a familiar scale with eight tones (C-D flat-E flat-E natural-F sharp-

G-A-B flat) that Scriabin often used.

Yoshihiro Kanno employs it to the point where you can't discern any significant distinctions between the five long piano works presented on this disc. They chiefly differ in that each piece has the pianist double on either a traditional Japanese instrument or play along with computer-generated sounds.

While the music is often static and overly long for what it has to say, the gorgeous sonorities, bold gestures and ingenious deployment of registers compensate and grab your attention. For example, *A Particle of Light* features kaleidoscopic scales moving at different tempi in each hand. *A Particle of Rainbow* concludes with massive two-handed chords and long, ecstatic trills. A toy piano provides effective melodic reinforcement in parts of *Lunar Rainbow*. Similar piano-writing fills up the six minutes of *Angel's Ladder*. At this juncture the computer processing kicks in, expanding the piano sonorities and bending pitches. Kanno catches you off-guard when he tosses in the opening measures of Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde* Prelude, yet he soon returns to eight-note scale rhapsodising, sugar-coated with quasi-spaceship effects.

Ironically, the shortest piece, *Prelude for Angel*, proves Kanno's strongest offering. It begins with disarming melodic simplicity, then becomes dark and murky, building up to a shattering climax before returning to its gentle point of origin. No doubt that BIS's luscious multichannel sound and

Noriko Ogawa's astonishingly proficient and colourful pianism make a better case for Kanno's aesthetic than a 250-word review. **Jed Distler**

Mozart

'Keys to Mozart'

Piano Sonatas – No 4, K282; No 11, K331;

No 12, K332; No 2, K280 – Adagio.

Fantasia, K396. Eine kleine Gigue, K574

Daria van den Bercken *pf*

Sony Classical (F) 88875 06011-2 (65' • DDD)



Wittily entitled 'Keys to Mozart', Daria van den Bercken's disc offers a wide-ranging

overview of the piano music. Sparsely pedalled, her way with the F major Sonata (K332) is more severe than affectionate, telling us that the gap between Mozart's Apollonian and Beethoven's Dionysian genius is less wide than is commonly supposed. Her uncompromising stance lacks tonal chiaroscuro and virtuosity in the truest sense (compare her way in the exuberant finale with Hamelin's fleetness and liberation in his recent Mozart album – Hyperion, 5/15); and both here and in K282 I longed for more of the range of expression she celebrates in her accompanying essay. Yet, blowing hot and cold, I warmed to her true oasis of calm in both the *Adagios* from K332 and K282, a pensiveness beyond her formidable focus. Most gratifyingly, too, she relaxes in the A major Sonata (K331) into a greater sense of geniality, though with a surprisingly pensive view of the Minuet (though why the hurry in the Trio's magical rejoinder?) and spins off the *Alla turca* finale with both memorable resilience and several added quirks and ornaments.

She is no less at home in the C minor Fantasia (K396), very much alive to its audacity and, in the central storms, to the sharp edge of Mozart's volatile rather than equable nature. Again, in both the G major Gigue's piquancy and sparkle and in the *Adagio* from K280, van den Bercken is fully alive to every startling modulation and abrupt change of direction. More generally, here is no Dresden china reduction and if, overall, admiration is qualified, it remains admiration. There are no notes on the music and Sony's sound is unflatteringly close. **Bryce Morrison**

Rameau

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Pièces de clavecin en concerts – excs

Bertrand Cuiller *hpd*

Mirare (F) ② MIR266 (151' • DDD)



The stream of keyboard tributes to Rameau's 250th anniversary last year

continues with Bertrand Cuiller's two-disc set for Mirare. His previous solo recordings include the Scarlatti *Essercizi* and the Tomkins *Lessons of Worth* (2/12) as well as the Bach harpsichord concerts with the Stradivaria Ensemble (9/09). This particular recording stems from his current residency at the Fondation Royaumont. He performs on an instrument by Philippe Humeau that produces a lovely clear, resonant sound in the Cistercian Abbey there.

What strikes the listener first is the ease and fluency with which Cuiller plays. His command of *legato* on the harpsichord is exceptional, and to it must be added *rubato* and *inégalité*. His tempi are generally moderate, allowing him a certain freedom to explore the inner phrasing of sections within pieces. His instinct in this matter is finely calibrated and sure. His command of ornamentation, written and improvised, is equally impressive. Only two small disappointments, then: the awkwardly phrased triplets at the end of each section of the opening Allemande (disc 2, tr 1) and the tepid bass notes in the passages of left-hand crossing in 'Les trois mains' (tr 4) of the *Nouvelle Suites*.

My previous survey praised Mahan Esfahani's recording in particular (Hyperion, 12/14), so it seems appropriate to compare it with that of Cuiller. The listener is immediately aware of the rather more domestic acoustic of Hatchlands, where Esfahani recorded, and the mellower tone of the lovely old Ruckers. Putting that aside, Esfahani draws from his instrument a richer – almost orchestral – variety of sound through his skilful use of manuals and coupling, not least in the character pieces such as 'Le rappel des oiseaux' and 'La poule'. Set against Esfahani's tempi, Cuiller's often seem too slow (for example in 'L'entretien des Muses' and 'Les Tourbillons', disc 1, trs 23 and 24), however thoughtfully he expresses the music; but while Esfahani consistently delivers confident, undeniably stylish and compelling performances, Cuiller's remarkable *legato* and attention to expressive detail make this refreshing new interpretation of Rameau's keyboard works definitely worth acquiring. **Julie Anne Sadie**



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Xenakis

Pléiades. Rebonds

Kuniko perc

Linn ⑤ CKD495 (60' • DDD/DSD)



The acclaimed percussion virtuoso Kuniko goes it alone, so to speak, in an

impressive multitracked performance of Xenakis's four-movement, 40-minute 1975 percussion ensemble work *Pléiades*.

Although Kuniko calibrates balances, dynamics, nuances and sonorities with her expected precision, she also creates a genuine sense of repartee between the parts, as if the six original percussionists were interacting. The subtle contrast between the third movement's resonating and non-resonating mallet instruments is particularly telling, as are the sounds of the different-size drum heads throughout the fourth movement. Reviewing the recording by Les Percussions de Strasbourg (Denon, 1/90), Arnold Whittall wrote that 'each movement is too long to sustain unflagging interest in what is essentially a music of rhythm and colour rather than, in the widest sense, of ideas,' and I have to agree with his assessment.

These words also apply to *Rebonds* for solo percussion, although there are many striking moments (pun intended!) such as Part A's asymmetrical flourishes. Mastering the composer's complex and multi-level rhythmic notation and pinpoint dynamic indications may well represent a kind of rite of passage to percussion virtuosos. Kuniko passes this rite triumphantly. Her effortless, glitch-free technique and ability to manipulate mallets and sticks to seemingly coax melodies from non-melodic instruments are bound to humble aspiring and established percussionists alike. Her clear, descriptive and often personalised annotations refreshingly contrast to Xenakis's convoluted and rather off-putting programme note for *Pléiades*. **Jed Distler**

Vassily Sapellnikoff • Xavier Scharwenka

'The Complete Recordings'

Alyabyev/Liszt *Le rossignol*, S250 No 1^a

Balakirev *Mazurka* No 4^a Brahms *Hungarian Dance* No 6^a Chopin *Berceuse*, Op 57^a. *Etudes*^a - Op 10 No 5; Op 25 No 9. *Fantaisie-Improptu*, Op 66^b. *Waltzes* - No 1, Op 18^a; No 2, Op 34 No 1^b Glinka/Balakirev *The Lark*^a Liszt *Two Concert Studies*, S145^b. *Hungarian Rhapsodies*, S244^a - No 12; No 13. *Liebestraum*, S541 No 3^b. *Valse-Improptu*, S213^a. Lyadov *A Musical Snuffbox*, Op 32^a Mendelssohn *Rondo capriccioso*, Op 14^b.

Scherzo, Op 16 No 2^a Rubinstein *Staccato étude*, Op 23 No 2^a Sapellnikoff *Gavotte*, Op 4 No 2^a. Polka-Miniature, Op 6 No 2^a. *Waltz*, Op 1^a Scharwenka *Polish Dance*, Op 3 No 1^b. *Spanish Serenade*, Op 63 No 1^b Schumann *Traumes Wirren*, Op 12 No 7^a Schumann/Liszt *Frühlingsnacht*, Op 29 No 12 S568^a Tchaikovsky *Humoresque*, Op 10 No 2^a. *Piano Concerto* No 1, Op 23^c Wagner/Liszt *Entry of the Guests* (Tanhäuser), S445 No 1^a. *Spinning Chorus* (Der fliegende Holländer), S440^a

Weber *Invitation to the Dance*^b

Weber/Tausig *Invitation to the Dance*^a

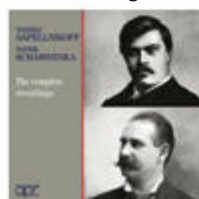
^aVassily Sapellnikoff, ^bXaver Scharwenka *pf*

^cAeolian Orchestra / Stanley Chapple

APR ② ② APR6016 (148' • ADD)

From ^aVocalion originals, recorded 1924-27;

^bColumbia originals, recorded 1910-13



Sapellnikoff's Tchaikovsky Concerto has appeared on CD before (notably Pearl

GEMMCD9163) but not his complete extant recordings (the sides he made for Decca in 1929, including a Rachmaninov Second Concerto, seem to have been destroyed), a total of 26 titles made between 1923 and 1927. Here is a virtuoso from the Golden Age who deserves a place alongside the Rosenthals and Hofmanns – indeed, this discography in some ways is superior, for Sapellnikoff, whatever his faults, is completely fearless and, unlike many of his peers, uninhibited by the recording process.

If Vassily Sapellnikoff (1868-1941) is remembered at all it is for being the only pianist to have recorded Tchaikovsky's First Piano Concerto who had played it under the composer's baton. His was the first recording ever made of the Concerto and, though he plays the now familiar third (posthumous) version of the score (with a few minor disparities and a hefty cut towards the end of the last movement), it remains an immensely important document. Some people think Sapellnikoff too matter-of-fact. Personally I love the pacing, the tempo relationships, his effortless fluency and (easily discernible) resonant, singing tone. It is an acoustic (as opposed to electrical) recording but the ear soon adjusts to the boxy sound and the double bass part played by tubas. Not everything is perfect but it is a remarkable performance led by the 26-year-old Stanley Chapple (1900-87), Vocalion's music director who later emigrated to the States, where he became involved with the first seasons at Tanglewood (and was thus an early mentor of Leonard Bernstein).

Among the 25 short works that follow are some truly wonderful performances, among them *Le rossignol* (Alyabyev-Liszt), *Valse-Improptu* and *Hungarian Rhapsody* No 12 (Liszt), and three of Sapellnikoff's own compositions that sparkle with fabulous dexterity and a palpable *joie de vivre*. If this were not enough, we are also treated to the complete recordings of Xaver Scharwenka (1858-1924), most of them made more than a decade earlier. The mere seven titles sound remarkably fine in Mark Obert-Thorn's transfers, though without the personality (or indeed accuracy) that shines through on the Sapellnikoff discs.

APR's executive producer, Mike Spring, has given us many treasures since he took over the helm but few rival these in significance, rarity (Sapellnikoff discs change hands for considerable sums) and sheer pleasure. It will leave pianophiles drooling. **Jeremy Nicholas**

'Masques'

Debussy *Masques* Liszt *Après une lecture*

du Dante, S161 No 7 Lü Wencheng *La lune*

d'automne au-dessus du lac tranquille

(arr Chen Peixun) Schubert *Drei Klavierstücke*,

D946 Scriabin *Masque*, Op 63 No 1

Szymanowski *Three Masques*, Op 34

Jiang Yi Lin *pf*

Solaris ⑤ SOL14101 (73' • DDD)



The concept of masks both real and abstract purportedly unifies the present recital's

diverse offerings; but the disc also adds up to a well-contrasted and musically stimulating programme. It takes both nerve and unusual pianistic assurance to open a recital with Szymanowski's dense and foreboding *Three Masques*, yet Jiang Yi Lin's command of the notes and textural clarity justify his daring. That said, Piotr Anderszewski's *Gramophone* Award-winning recording (Virgin, 9/05) probes deeper with regard to pinpoint dynamic control and heeding the composer's minute expressive directives. In the little Scriabin Op 63 No 1 *Masque*, Lin's delicate interpretation keeps the top melody in the foreground, whereas the slower Pascal Amoyel recording (La Dolce Volta) brings out more harmonic sensuality. His gently rounded Debussy *Masques* yields to Jean-Efflam Bavouzet's quicker and more sharply accented traversal (Chandos, 1/08).

By contrast, Lin's angular, slightly dry treatment of Schubert's third *Klavierstück* lends appropriate swagger to the music's cross-rhythmic phrase groupings. Too bad

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Harpsichordist Mahan Esfahani, whose debut on Archiv 'unfolds with a sense of continuity and surprise that is closer to DJ culture than to "classical" programming'

that he tends to round off the first piece's dynamic surges, which Mitsuko Uchida unleashes with incisive fury (Philips, 8/98), while his pleasantly lyrical approach to No 2 is a tad generic when measured alongside the more specifically inflected Arrau, Pollini and Brendel versions. While other Liszt *Dante* Sonata recordings teem with more palpable ferocity and force, one must credit Lin for not turning the music into an endless octave étude by virtue of his projection of long lines. Lin's sonority opens up in the final selection, *La lune d'automne au-dessus du lac tranquille*, where Chen Peixun's transcription projects the music's pentatonic sound world to gorgeous pianistic effect. The disc's executive producer and Yin's former teacher, Ewa Kupiec (a great pianist in her own right), ought to be proud. **Jed Distler**

'Time Present and Time Past'

CPE Bach Variations on 'La folia d'Espagne', Wq118/9^a **JS Bach** Keyboard Concerto, BWV1052^{ab} **Geminiani** Concerto grosso in D minor^b **Górecki** Harpsichord Concerto, Op 40^{ab} **Reich** Piano Phase^a **A Scarlatti** Variations on 'La folia'^a

^a**Mahan Esfahani** *hpd* ^b**Concerto Köln**
Archiv Produktion © 479 4481AH (73' • DDD)



The fusion of old and new styles characterising harpsichordist Mahan

Esfahani's DG debut unfolds with a sense of continuity and surprise that is closer to DJ culture than to 'classical' programming, with *La folia* as a recurring character. In the Scarlatti *La folia* Variations, for example, which Esfahani sails through with tasteful bravura – notice how the final variation's rippling scales and concluding dominant chord assiduously dovetail into the Górecki Concerto's *Allegro molto*, where a sustained string cantus firmus underpins the harpsichord's relentless, machine-like patterns. By contrast, the second movement consists of dissonant, consistently pulsating modules in sequential blocks. If one must play such crude, simple-minded music, it's best to do so with Esfahani and company's energy and precision.

Next up is CPE Bach's quirkily inventive *La folia* Variations, where Esfahani's subtle overlapping *legato* fingerwork and intuitive grasp of the composer's mood-swings are deeply impressive. While the variations in

the Geminiani Concerto (after Corelli's *La folia*) stand out for textural clarity and suave tempo relationships, the robust sonorities and wider colour palette distinguishing the Pearlman/Boston Baroque traversal (Telarc, 5/09) communicate more shapely joy. Esfahani's firmly centred articulation and rhythm make a plausible case for Steve Reich's *Piano Phase* as a harpsichord vehicle, even if one misses the cumulative effect of the piano's resonance.

However, the Bach D minor Concerto faces formidable catalogue competition. Concerto Köln's rigid phrasing and mannered dynamic calibrations in the slow movement convey all of the perfection of waxed fruit, providing an incongruous backdrop to Esfahani's expressive and harmonically aware solo playing. Put on the better-recorded Levin/Rilling traversal in Hänssler's Bach Edition and you're in another world, where the outer movements sing, dance and breathe. I wish DG had included Esfahani's invigorating Handel Chaconne and *Harmonious Blacksmith* performances on the physical disc, rather than as downloads only, given the label's recent propensity for longer-playing discs.

Jed Distler

Jennifer Higdon

Her music may be melodic and accessible, but probe beneath the surface and you'll always be surprised, writes **Andrew Farach-Colton**

Jennifer Higdon's myriad accolades and accomplishments are impressive by any standard, but particularly in the world of contemporary classical music. She's won a Pulitzer Prize and a Grammy Award. Her music is in such high demand that she's able to compose exclusively on commission. And her champions include top-tier soloists, ensembles and orchestras. According to a recent survey of US orchestras, Higdon is one of the most performed living American composers.

Yet Higdon's most striking achievement doesn't fit so easily into a biography, and that's how thoroughly her music has filtered into every stratum of classical music culture in the United States. Glance through the 'Upcoming Performances' page of her official website and you'll find that her work is being played not only by the Houston Symphony and Philadelphia Orchestra, but also by municipal, community, and high school ensembles across the country. On the surface, it appears to be a simple formula: Higdon writes music that audiences like to hear and musicians find gratifying to play. But is it really so simple?

Higdon came to music relatively late. Her father was a visual artist, a 'hippy', and a fan of the avant-garde in almost everything but music. She was born in Brooklyn, though her parents moved to Atlanta soon thereafter, and then to a farm in the Appalachian Mountains of Tennessee. The composer

'I believe in a clear pulse and a clear rhythm. I like to be able to hear the harmonic movement' – Jennifer Higdon

recalls hearing almost no classical music in her childhood; instead, her musical diet consisted of The Beatles, Bob Marley, folk and bluegrass. At 15, she happened upon her mother's old flute and, with the help of a method book, taught herself. She didn't begin composing until she was 21 – and even then only at the behest of her flute teacher – but went on to complete graduate studies at Curtis and the University of Pennsylvania, working with Ned Rorem and George Crumb, respectively.

Higdon has been frank about her allegiance to traditional musical values – what some would call 'accessibility'. 'I believe wholeheartedly in melody,' she declared in a 2011 interview at Drexel University. 'I believe in a clear pulse and a clear rhythm. I like to be able to hear the harmonic movement. And I have a tendency to make musical events happen or turn over fast.' She has explained her philosophy partly as a reaction to the anything-goes 'happenings' she experienced through her father's artistic interests, her grounding in the steady rhythms of popular music, and also the dogged determination she felt she needed in order to make up for



Higdon's concerto for Hilary Hahn (pictured next to Juanjo Mena), won a Pulitzer

her own late start. As she put it to the *Los Angeles Times*, 'You don't need a PhD to understand my pieces.' What's intriguing, at least to me, is how *unconventional* the music is under its generally conventional surface.

Let's start with melody, and the understanding that her music is not, in fact, chock-a-block with hummable tunes (though she certainly knows how to write those). Rather, she tends to alternate between rhythmically strong phrases built from short, often simple motives and long-limbed, rhythmically restless, discursively expansive lines. 'Pale Yellow', the first movement of her Piano Trio (2003), is an especially lovely example, as both elements are so tender and lyrical. The piano's opening chords sound almost improvisatory, with leaps and contemplative pauses; the cello enters, ruminative, circling chant-like around a single tone; then, finally, the violin leads its partners in a yearning phrase built from slowly inching steps. As the movement unfolds, these elements intertwine and elaborate. It's, to my ears, Higdon at her most memorably melodic. (I must add that while some critics discern Copland's influence in this movement, I hear Debussy as channelled through Joni Mitchell; odd, yes, but it works beautifully.) The Trio's second movement, 'Fiery Red', gives us the flip side; here, both the motivically terse and discursive elements work together to ignite an almost unrelenting rush of nervous energy.

Bartók is a clear influence in 'Fiery Red', as it is (unsurprisingly, perhaps) in Higdon's Concerto for Orchestra (2002). This was her breakthrough work, commissioned and premiered by the Philadelphia Orchestra. But though it looks backwards – not only to Bartók but various other mid-20th-century masters – the music displays such



HIGDON FACTS

Born December 31, 1962

Education Bowling Green State University with Judith Bentley; Curtis Institute with Ned Rorem; University of Pennsylvania with George Crumb

Career Full-time composer (1992-present); Faculty member, Curtis Institute of Music (1994-present)

Breakthrough works *blue cathedral* (1999); *Concerto for Orchestra* (2002)

Definitive Work *Violin Concerto* (2010)

On Higdon 'A self-taught flautist who grew up in rural Kentucky, Higdon is anything but a classical music insider, her hallmark being that her unthreatening musical surfaces which recall Stravinsky, Nielsen and the more tranquil moments of Copland are a thin veil over music that's amiably subversive.' (David Patrick Stearns)

Higdon on Higdon 'My job is to communicate. I feel that you should be able to come to my music without having any kind of knowledge about classical music. I want to be able to speak to you on a kind of visceral level. "Accessibility" doesn't seem like a negative word to me.'

confidence and élan that one is swept away. Notable, here, are the frequent and pronounced changes of texture, colour, and character she employs to create a sustained sense of surprise.

One's never really sure what might come next, though at the same time, the various ideas are woven together expertly – there's a strong feeling of structural integrity. Indeed, the climaxes are carefully placed, not just within the individual movements but in the work as a whole, which forms a shapely and satisfying dramatic arc.

Higdon's sure dramatic sense is evident, too, in *blue cathedral* (2000), a 12-minute tone-poem written as a memorial to her younger brother, Andrew Blue Higdon, who died of cancer in his early thirties. This is Higdon's runaway hit; since its premiere at Curtis in 2000, it has been performed more than 500 times. And it's quintessential Higdon, marrying simplicity with complexity, and stability with surprise. Rapturous woodwind solos (her brother was a clarinetist) soar over luminous, ever-shifting pools of divided strings. A slow-building climax, capped finally by piercing trumpets, provides catharsis and makes the coda feel like a spiritually cleansing exhalation.

One of the magical things about the end of *blue cathedral* is the unusual, ethereal tinkling, produced by several dozen of the players shaking Chinese reflex balls – a sound Higdon happened upon by accident by bumping into a box of these balls at home. She has employed such 'experimental' touches in other works, as well, perhaps a reflection of her studies with George Crumb, who loved to create new timbres

through special instrumental effects. *Zaka* (2003), Higdon's sonically playful and imaginative piece for the new music ensemble Eighth Blackbird, is especially delightful in this regard, as is her Percussion Concerto (2005), written for Colin Currie. In the latter work, Higdon goes to great lengths to provide the soloist with long stretches of soft, melodic music (mostly for vibraphone and marimba) which acts as a welcome foil for the obligatory, drum-heavy fireworks one (rightly) expects in a percussion extravaganza.

Higdon has become something of a concerto specialist over the past decade, producing works for oboe (2005, later adapted for soprano saxophone), a bluegrass trio (the *Concerto 4-3* from 2007), and piano (2009). And it was the Violin Concerto (2010), composed for Hilary Hahn, that earned Higdon the Pulitzer. Here, again, the composer has written a crowd-pleaser that pleases for reasons one might not expect. There's lots of lyrical high-flying writing for the soloist but, as in *blue cathedral*, it's more rhapsodic than melodic. (Duncan Druce – in his *Gramophone* review, 4/11 – describes the slow movement as 'vaguely reminiscent of Vaughan Williams but with the lark ascending into a more unsettled sky'.)

Indeed, there's an English pastoral quality to much of Higdon's lyrical writing. It's unmissable in *Exaltation of Larks* (2005) for string quartet, though dabbed with French Impressionist colours, and also in parts of *The Singing Rooms* (2007) for violin, chorus, and orchestra, one of the composer's most affecting works. Higdon sets Jeanne Minahan's emotionally layered poems so that every word can be understood; occasionally one senses it's the violin and orchestra who are 'singing', not the choir. In *Dooryard Bloom* (2004), for baritone and orchestra, textual comprehension is, again, a primary concern – and how naturally she handles the ebb and flow of Whitman's complex prosody. Higdon's way with words will be in the spotlight again this coming August when her first opera, *Cold Mountain*, is premiered in Santa Fe. Is it surprising that I have high expectations? **G**

RECOMMENDED RECORDINGS

Three great introductions to Higdon's sound world

**Concerto for Orchestra. City Scape**

Atlanta Symphony Orchestra / Robert Spano

Telarc © CD80620 (4/04)

An ideal introduction to Jennifer Higdon's music. The Concerto for Orchestra put the composer on the musical map and serves as a thrilling link to the mid-century masterworks that inspired it.

**Piano Trio. Sax Sonata. Legacy, etc**

University of Wyoming faculty members

Albany Records © TROY1395

Higdon's intimate side. The Piano Trio demonstrates her gift for tender melody. *Legacy*, for violin and piano, is a brief but passionate elegy, while the Sax Sonata for alto saxophone suggests nocturnal urban landscapes.

**The Singing Rooms**

Jennifer Koh *vn* Atlanta Symphony and Chorus /

Robert Spano Telarc © TEL3263002

Part concerto, part choral song-cycle, *The Singing Room* is one of Higdon's most ingenious and affecting creations. Jennifer Koh plays the difficult violin part with exceptional beauty of tone, and the ASO Chorus is on top form.

Vocal



Richard Wigmore welcomes Paul McCreesh's new L'Allegro:

'As ever in Handel, McCreesh paces and colours the music with an acute feeling for its specific tinta' ► REVIEW ON PAGE 79



Andrew Mellor listens to a disc of Danish choral songs by Nielsen:

'Nielsen thought them every bit as important as his symphonies and believed that the nucleus is the same in both' ► REVIEW ON PAGE 82

JS Bach • Graupner • Telemann

'Bach and his Rivals'

JS Bach Cantatas – No 22, Jesus nahm zu sich die Zwölfe; No 81, Jesus schläft, was soll ich hoffen **Graupner** Aus der Tiefen rufen wir, GWV1113/23a. Gott führt die seinen wunderbar, GWV1115/24. Overture, GWV413 **Telemann** Lass vom Bösen und tue Gutes, TWV1:1038. Wer sich rachtet, TWV1/1600. Overture, TWV55/fis1

Rachel Elliott sop **Sally Bruce-Payne** contr

Simon Wall ten **Matthew Brook** bass

The Bach Players / **Nicolette Moonen** vn

Hyphen Press (M) (2) HPM008 (132' • DDD)



Behind this project's eye-catching title lies a neat concept, and a more nuanced reality.

The lives of Bach, Telemann, and Graupner intersected at various points, the most conspicuous professional occasion being their candidacy for the post of Kantor at the Thomasschule, Leipzig. The first of these two discs lets us hear the pieces they each submitted for their respective auditions (or almost: Telemann's doesn't survive, so a 'reasonable facsimile' is offered in its place), and the second presents the cantatas all three composed for the very same Sunday a year or so later (January 30, 1724). The programme is completed with instrumental *ouvertures* (or suites) by Telemann and Graupner.

The object of the exercise is not to praise the winner of the competition yet again (after all, Bach was offered the job only after the other two had turned it down), but to offer a space for something like dispassionate comparison. In this, the programme and performances succeed: Graupner's treatment of the story of Christ's saving himself and his disciples from shipwreck on the sea of Galilee has plenty of fury about it. Indeed, he comes out of the exercise rather well, his cantatas having much to offer, both formally and illustratively. I was not so taken with Telemann's efforts on this occasion, and

Bach's audition cantata doesn't strike me as being out of the top drawer by his own standards. I'd say the same, incidentally, of the *ouvertures* by Telemann and Graupner, both of whom wrote hundreds of them (as opposed to Bach's four!).

The Bach Players turn in fine performances: the oboe parts in Bach's and Graupner's audition cantatas are impressively handled. The singers too give a good account of themselves, barring some of the bravura passages in the 1724 cantatas that seem to stretch the male soloists in particular. On the other hand, the 'Tombeau' movement from Graupner's suite had me pondering whether the players hit the right note there: funereal or not, could the composer have intended something quite so ponderous? **Fabrice Fitch**

JS Bach

St Mark Passion, BWV247 (reconstr Grychtolik)

Gudrun Sidonie Otto sop **Terry Wey** counter ten

Daniel Johannsen ten **Stephan MacLeod**,

Hanno Müller-Brachmann basses

Knaben Kantorei Basel; Capriccio Baroque

Orchestra / Markus Teutschbein

Rondeau Production (E) (2) ROP609091 (114' • DDD)



Picander's libretto for the *St Mark Passion* was published in his edition of collected

poetry (1732). Bach's lost setting was probably performed on Good Friday 1731 but its musical content might have included parodies of five numbers from the *Trauer Ode* (which also has verses by Picander) and an aria from the alto solo cantata *Widerstehe, doch der Sünde* (Weimar, c1714). Markus Teutschbein conducts a new reconstruction that takes into account the recent discovery of a later libretto that originated from a revival in 1744. Each part of the oratorio features an additional aria text, which the editor (and harpsichordist) Alexander Grychtolik claims reveals the composer's 'search for a better balance of the movements'. Otherwise, the

reconstruction follows the path of most predecessors with regards to choice of parody sources for arias; but Grychtolik also uses some chorales collected by Bach's pupil Johann Ludwig Dietels and models *turba* choruses and Christ's recitatives on similar moments in the other Passions (which means at times an impression of pastiche is inevitable). Rondeau's documentation neglects to include a list of sources and methods for each movement but anyone familiar with the *Trauer Ode* will instantly spot the opening chorus and the flute-adorned tenor aria that begins Part 2.

The 75-strong Basle Boys' Choir lacks neither shading nor emotional engagement, but diction and clarity of counterpoint are understandably in shorter supply, especially in the reverberant wash of Basle's Martinskirche; the small period-instrument forces of the Capriccio Baroque Orchestra are swamped in choruses. Terry Wey's softly devout 'Mein Heiland, dich vergess ich nicht' (with a pair of rapturous violas da gamba) has rhetorical subtlety and his account of 'Falsche Welt' is the highlight of the reconstruction; Teutschbein's reduction to solo five-part strings and adoption of a clipped *staccato* approach to the repeated quavers in the bass-line are both effective. Gudrun Sidonie Otto's forthright yet delicate 'Er kommt, er ist vorhanden' has a few scrappy moments from the strings that the acoustic helps to soften. Daniel Johannsen's honeyed voice makes him an endearing Evangelist. The fanfare heralding this set makes a mountain out of a molehill but this interesting project sheds a little bit of new light on Bach's enigmatic *St Mark Passion*. **David Vickers**

JS Bach

St Matthew Passion, BWV244 (1727 version)

Charles Daniels ten Evangelist **Peter Harvey** bass

Christus **Bethany Seymour**, **Helen Neeves** sops

Sally Bruce-Payne, **Nancy Cole** mezs **Joseph**

Cornwell, **Julian Podger** tens **Matthew Brook** bass

York Bach Choir; Yorkshire Baroque Soloists /

Peter Seymour

Signum (M) (2) SIGCD385 (154' • DDD • T/t)



The *St Matthew Passion* was probably first performed in 1727 but the music we

usually hear is from Bach's revised score, prepared afresh for a revival in 1736 (and used again in 1742). The original 1727 score is lost but traces of it are evident in manuscript copies made by Johann Christoph Farlau (pupil of Bach's son-in-law Altnickol) and Agricola. Most variants are minuscule details but there are some obvious differences: the end of Part 1 has a simple chorale ('Jesus lass ich nicht von mir') instead of the extended chorus that later replaced it ('O Mensch, beweine dein Sünde gross'); at the beginning of Part 2 'Ach, nun ist mein Jesus hin' features bass solo voice instead of alto; the obbligato instrument in 'Komm, süßes Kreuz' is not the usual viola da gamba but an archlute (one of the few times Bach used a lute in his Leipzig church music).

In contrast to Richard Egarr's preference for large-scale forces, Peter Seymour adopts the Rifkin/Parrott theory that Bach's concerted church music was probably sung by 'concertists' and 'ripenists'. The baker's dozen of singers are led by Charles Daniels's serene Evangelist, whose poetic wisdom illustrates the description of Peter's weeping with unusual bitterness. Peter Harvey's Christus radiates compassionate authority, and his softly intimate 'Komm, süßes Kreuz' is an ideal foil for theorist Elizabeth Kenny and Seymour (using a harpsichord lute-stop). The second bass is Matthew Brook, who therefore sings different arias from those he recorded with the Dunedin Consort (Linn, 4/08); he firmly captures the dichotomy of articulate precision and dramatic desperation in 'Gebt mir meinen Jesum wieder'. Helen Neeves's shapely phrasing in 'Blute nur, du liebes Herz' accords intuitively with the contoured strings. Bethany Seymour sings 'Ich will dir mein Herze schenken' with an attractive lightness of touch. Julian Podger's forceful 'Geduld!' takes no prisoners but Joseph Cornwell's florid higher passages are effortful ('Ich will bei meinem Jesu wachen'). The double orchestra's single strings cause textures with woodwinds to be balanced transparently; the prominence accorded to two oboes da caccia in 'Mache dich, mein Herze, rein' creates a fruitier rustic character than usual.

Seymour's pacing often has a comfortable feeling of 'rightness' and integrity. Chorales and *turba* choruses tend

to be brisk and gutsy, and the only noteworthy idiosyncrasy is the reduction to organ accompaniment in a few chorales, such as those at the heart of Part 2 (hardly a cardinal sin, so to speak). **David Vickers**

JS Bach

St Matthew Passion, BWV244 (1727 version)

James Gilchrist *ten* Evangelist **Matthew Rose** *bass*

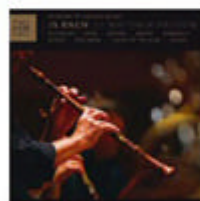
Christus **Elizabeth Watts** *sop* **Sarah Connolly** *contr*

Thomas Hobbs *ten* **Christopher Maltman** *bass*

Choir of the AAM; Academy of Ancient Music /

Richard Egarr *hpd*

AAM Ⓢ Ⓢ AAM0004 (143' • DDD • T/t)



The elements constituting an unforgettable Bach Passion journey are always splendidly elusive. Lindsay Kemp wrote that the Academy of Ancient Music's recent *St John Passion* imparted an 'aching kind of tragedy' (3/14) – a notable attribute to that particular reading but arguably achieved more by the luminosity of individual performances than by a particularly unified or strong vision as we experience here.

The more substantial, theologically reflective and extended world of the *St Matthew* offers an equivalent of remarkable solo, choral and instrumental contributions, yet accompanied by a significantly greater range of interpretative possibility. The sinewy restlessness and foreboding in the rolling dark clouds of the opening chorus launch the work with cinematic focus. How fragrantly delicate and viscerally pointed textures seem here to match our seasoned expectations simultaneously is something of a wonder, though a few will need more convincing of the shifting *tactus* (eg speeding up at 'Wohin'? and, more radically, slowing down at 4'50" on 'Sieht ihn').

What essentially transpires is the billowing theatricality of a 17th-century oratorio, encouraged by the use of Bach's initial and rather more austere version of 1727, a text still to be given its final polish and yet exploited fully by Richard Egarr to encourage his singers to 'enact' emotions freely from within the heart of the imagery. The sense of concision of this more reined-in score encourages new inflections, such as quasi-fermatas on the ties in the instrumental ritornello of 'Buss und Reu' (just a little gimmicky for my taste) and a wonderfully unsettling bittersweetness in 'O Schmerz', where, again, tempo fluctuations take the listener down unexpected paths.

If some of the numbers alight a touch breathlessly on a conceit of disquieting urgency, then the considered placement of the narrative falls to the unassuming and unforced Evangelist of James Gilchrist; his is a supremely courageous and intelligent reading whose interaction with the human volatility of Matthew Rose's Jesus is profoundly affecting. The evolving shift from observer to 'stakeholder' is exceptionally skilful, especially at the point leading to Christopher Maltman's beguilingly consoling 'Mache dich'.

'So ist mein Jesus nun gefangen' is always a key gauge of how far the listener can be transported, in this case towards the metaphysical spheres of 'Mond und Licht', the duettists' trajectory defined by the dreadful enormity of inevitable physical abuse. The outstanding Elizabeth Watts and Sarah Connolly have their bigger moments (the latter's 'Erbarme dich' is simply unmissable) but this is a Gordian knot as yet untied for mankind and its effect is as breathtaking as Fritz Lehmann's relevatory reading of this movement in 1949 (Music & Arts). Bach's later *appoggiaturas* may not have been a good idea on this evidence. While the 1727 text is indeed interesting in its steady stream of the unfamiliar, the absence of 'O Mensch, beweine' to end the first half feels more of a significant loss in a reading of such uniformly outstanding achievement.

This is a small gripe in the context of Egarr's compellingly original vision of this greatest of all musical tombeaus, with its fresh anticipation founded on collective adrenaline and uniformly outstanding lyrical Bach-singing. The recorded sound is a triumph in all its perspectives.

Jonathan Freeman-Attwood

JS Bach • S-D Sandström

JS Bach Jesu, meine Freude, BWV227. Fürchte dich nicht, ich bin bei dir, BWV228. Singet dem Herrn ein neues Lied, BWV225 **S-D Sandström** Komm, Jesu, komm. Der Geist hilft unser Schwachheit auf. Lobet den Herrn, alle Heiden

Hanover Chamber Choir;

La Festa Musicale / Stephan Doormann

Rondeau Production Ⓢ ROP6105 (67' • DDD)



It takes a brave composer to go up against Bach, and despite the best

attempts of Jan-Geert Wolff's elegant booklet-notes to convince us otherwise, that is exactly what is asked of Sven-David Sandström in this disc from Hanover's Kammerchor. Sweden's foremost

contemporary composer has spent recent years expanding his choral repertoire, not only setting the same six texts as Bach's motets and a *St Matthew Passion* but also giving himself the challenge of writing music for all the feast days of the liturgical calendar. Conductor Stephan Doormann here creates a composite cycle of six motets: three from Bach and three from Sandström. By avoiding duplication of any single text, Doormann ensures this is a dialogue rather than – as Wolff terms it – a musical 'boxing match'. The result is a thoughtful and thought-provoking blend of the familiar and the unexpected, a musical meditation on texts and music we listen to too frequently to hear clearly.

Sandström's *Komm, Jesu, komm* is a heady opener, plunging us into the cloudy cluster-chords best known to English audiences from his astonishing *Es ist ein ros'* arrangement. Rather than emulate Bach's stately exhortations, Sandström's repeated cries of 'Komm' have a scattered, Babel-like quality, gathering gradually to greater unanimity and strength. Other highlights include the exquisite chorale 'Du heilige Brunst' from *Der Geist hilft unser Schwachheit auf* – daringly simple – and the rhythmic instability and excitement that open *Lobet den Herrn*.

The Bach performances (accompanied by La Festa Musicale) are tidy and precise – faultless for contrapuntal clarity. However, they lack the excitement, the risk brought to the Sandström motets. Almost too respectful and understated in their gestures, they load the dice in favour of the Swedish composer. It's an advantage he really doesn't need; Sandström's works stand on their own expressive and idiosyncratic merits. **Alexandra Coghlan**

Brahms

Ein deutsches Requiem, Op 45

Christina Landshamer *sop* **Florian Boesch** *bass*

SWR Vocal Ensemble; NDR Chorus;

SWR Radio Symphony Orchestra, Stuttgart /

Sir Roger Norrington

Hänssler Classic © CD93 327 (64' • DDD • T/t)



At just over an hour, this excellent performance is some 12 minutes shorter than recent issues under Tennstedt (BBC Legends) and Nézet-Séguin (LPO, 8/10), but it never sounds rushed. Norrington's speeds are about the same as Marin Alsop's – with one notable exception, his reading of 'Wie lieblich sind deine Wohnungen' taking a good minute

longer. As we have come to expect, Sir Roger applies early music practice to his modern-instrument interpretation: the opening phrase of the first movement sounds almost as though played by viols rather than cellos. The introduction to 'Denn alles Fleisch' is light, *staccato* rather than the marked *legato*, *ma un poco marcato*, but the choral restatement packs plenty of weight.

The harp sounds unnaturally prominent in places but perhaps there are two of them. In general, Norrington has a knack of drawing out detail that other conductors overlook. The minatory horn and trumpet calls at the beginning of 'Herr, lehre doch mich' seem to anticipate the Last Judgement; and when did you last notice the second horn's downward arpeggio at the reprise of 'Wie lieblich'? The *fp* accents in the strings a few seconds earlier are equally noteworthy, and Norrington is scrupulously attentive to the hairpin dynamics of 'Denn wir haben hie'.

To judge by the photographs in the booklet, the combined choirs number about 50. They meet all the work's demands admirably, delicate or full-throated as required. As already suggested, the orchestra responds to their Conductor Laureate with enthusiastic subtlety. Fine soloists, too, with Florian Boesch conveying barely suppressed terror in his first solo. **Richard Lawrence**

Selected comparison:

Leipzig Rad Cb & SO, Alsop (9/13) (NAXO) 8 572996

Chilcott

St John Passion

Ed Lyon *ten* Evangelist **Neal Davies** *bass* Christ

Darren Jeffery *bass-bar* Pilate **Laurie Ashworth** *sop*

Matthew Souter *va* **Richard May** *vc* **Nick Baron**

timp **Jonathan Vaughn** *org* **Wells Cathedral Choir,**

Oratorio Society and Voluntary Choir;

Chaconne Brass / Matthew Owens

Signum © SIGCD412 (68' • DDD • T)



Bob Chilcott's compact *St John Passion* follows in outline Bach's work.

It opens powerfully: the chorus proclaim Christ as saviour of mankind, Chaconne Brass introducing these verses in a declamatory style. Ed Lyon sings his long role with conviction. The voice is agile, a touch monochrome at times, but the words are clear and at key moments in the drama, as in 'The Crucifixion', he comes into his own with some expressive singing in the upper register. Neal Davies in his portrayal of Christ has a more sombre timbre, with

brass and organ lending gravity to his words. Darren Jeffery, in the passive role of Pilate, is the lighter baritone. Laurie Ashworth's pure timbre complements the ethereal choral tone in two of the meditations, striking an appropriately personal note in 'Christ, my beloved', where the tender part-writing is a pleasure to hear.

Chilcott's expression marks don't always receive full value here or in 'Away vain world', where the heading 'soft and inward' goes for little. There's a lack of forward momentum at times both here and in places where the drama could be propelled along as it is by the cellist Richard May and the Evangelist as they approach the choral climax, 'We have no king but Caesar'.

The new hymn settings are more a matter of personal taste. The first, 'It is a thing most wonderful', could well compete with *Coe Fen* among the nation's favourite hymns. However, coming after the scene in 'The Garden', where the gospel reading has just got under way, its well-upholstered writing strikes an incongruous note. Nevertheless, the unison opening of the concluding hymn, 'When I survey the wondrous Cross', conveys the simplicity of purpose that would seem to lie behind this work. **Adrian Edwards**

Dvořák

Requiem, Op 89

Ilse Eerens *sop* **Bernarda Fink** *contr* **Maximilian**

Schmitt *ten* **Nathan Berg** *bass* **Collegium Vocale**

Gent; Royal Flemish Philharmonic Orchestra /

Philippe Herreweghe

PHI (M) ② LPH016 (93' • DDD • T/t)



Just months after I reviewed Antoni Wit's marvellous 2012 Naxos recording of

Dvořák's Requiem, along comes another excellent recording. This one was made in Antwerp in 2014 under the direction of Philippe Herreweghe and is a successor to his acclaimed Dvořák *Stabat mater* (7/13), sharing two of the same soloists. Frankly, in terms of interpretation and quality of execution, there is little to choose between Wit and Herreweghe, although the latter takes about five minutes less than Wit and has a tighter grip on the work's dramatic energy. The engineering in both vividly captures the full-bodied scoring. The organ is more prominent under Wit, whereas Herreweghe's balance makes more of the bass clarinet, tam-tam and bells.

Finding the English choral scene a welcome contrast to the destructive



Philippe Herreweghe conducts his Collegium Vocale Gent and the Royal Flemish Philharmonic Orchestra in a new recording of Dvořák's Requiem

criticism he was experiencing in central Europe, Dvořák grasped Birmingham's 1890 oratorio commission (*The Dream of Gerontius* having been briefly considered), producing a monumentally opulent Requiem. Dvořák was no stranger to mourning (he and his wife buried three of their nine offspring), and death is omnipresent, identified by a short, chromatic motif which permeates the music's sinews.

Herreweghe evokes the full range of this multi-layered piece. His strings and harp really shimmer at the start of the Offertorium and he achieves a chilling intensity at the opening of the 'Tuba mirum', with the trumpets' and tam-tam's eerie premonitions of Mahler. In the 'Pie Jesu' the horns and woodwind glow warmly before the soprano, alto and tenor soloists take over and sag in pitch a fraction. Generally, though, the solo quartet is well balanced. **Malcolm Riley**

Selected comparison:

Warsaw PO, Wit (1/15) (NAXO) 8 572874/5

Graupner • Heinichen • Telemann

Graupner Vergnügte Ruh, beliebte Seelenlust, GWV1147 **Heinichen** Canticum Simeonis **Telemann** Ich hebe meine Augen auf zu den Bergen, TVWV/17. Ouverture, TWV55:Es4

Veronika Winter *sop* **Alex Potter** *countertenor*
Hans Jörg Mammel *ten* **Markus Flaig** *bass*
L'Arpa Festante / Rien Voskuilen
Carus © CARUS83 337 (78' • DDD)



every fortnight. His earliest extant sacred work, *Ich hebe meine Augen auf zu den Bergen*, was probably composed around 1703, and the pattern-based construction of six concise movements reveals Telemann has already cultivated a fondness for contrasting textures using simple means (such as the oboes and bassoon in the bass aria) and an uncanny awareness of tuneful vocal writing and delicate rhetorical effects (the lightly tripping 'Amen' conclusion, sung sweetly by Veronika Winter and Markus Flaig).

Christoph Graupner's *Vergnügte Ruh, beliebte Seelenlust* (presumably composed for Darmstadt shortly before 1711) is scored for solo soprano, two recorders, two muted violins and two 'violettas'. L'Arpa Festante's softly lyrical playing and Winter's shapely singing reveal abundant melodious charm

and an appealing sense of pastoral instrumental colour in Graupner's setting of the same Lehms poem that Bach used in 1726 for his sublime alto cantata (No 170).

Proceedings conclude with Heinichen's modern madrigal-form cantata *Herr, nun lässest du deinen Diener*, which is a Lutheran treatment of Simeon's *Nunc dimittis* for the Feast of the Purification of Mary. It was probably composed around 1709, when the former Thomasschule pupil was composer at the opera house and director of the town's collegium musicum (before his life-changing trip to Venice), and the centrepiece slow aria is sung consolingly by Hans Jörg Mammel in dialogue with Christoph Hesse's tender violin obbligato. These excellent performances remind us how many of the finest Saxonian Baroque composers had close ties with the university town long before Bach turned up in 1723.

David Vickers

Handel

L'Allegro, il Penseroso ed il Moderato^a.

Concerti grossi - Op 6 No 1; Op 6 No 3; Op 7 No 1

^a**Gillian Webster** *sop* ^a**Laurence Kilsby** *treb*

^a**Jeremy Ovenden** *ten* ^a**Peter Harvey** *bar*

^a**Ashley Riches** *bass* ^a**William Whitehead** *org*

Gabrieli Consort and Players / Paul McCreesh

Signum ® ② SIGCD392 (142' • DDD • T/t)



L'Allegro is just the work for those who doubt that the periwigged

monument of Victorian imagination was one of the most vital and sensuous of composers. Milton's two complementary poems, skilfully filleted and interleaved by Handel's friends James Harris and Charles Jennens, offered the composer a wealth of graphic images. He responded in a series of poetic vignettes that explore the contrasting temperaments of the cheerful extrovert (*L'Allegro*) and the shadow-seeking introvert (*Il Penseroso*) while evoking an Arcadian idyll, man and nature in perfect harmony. With characteristic 18th-century reasonableness, the concluding *Il Moderato* seeks to reconcile Milton's two 'extreme' humours; but while Jennens's abstract verse is something of an anticlimax (coffee house wags dubbed it 'Moderatissimo'), the music is still delightful Handel, touching the sublime in the sunrise duet 'As steals the morn'.

Paul McCreesh has chosen to replicate as closely as possible what Handel performed at Lincoln's Inn Fields on February 27, 1740. In those days there was no question of nipping out to the bar in the intervals. Instead the audience stayed put while Handel's band performed one of his new Concerti grossi Op 6, another of which had already served as overture. In the second interval the master then unfurled a 'new concerto on the Organ', the noble and resplendent Op 7 No 1. McCreesh's concept works well, though it is a pity to miss a clutch of superb arias Handel included in later performances, above all 'Sometimes let gorgeous Tragedy' and 'May at last my weary age'.

Following Handel's precedent, *L'Allegro*'s music is divided between three male singers: a treble, a tenor and a bass. With the lion's share of the music, Jeremy Ovenden sings with rounded, mellifluous tone and audible delight in Milton's imagery, whether in an impish 'laughing' aria, seconded by the lusty chorus, the mock-pompous 'I'll to the well trod stage anon' or, in reflective mode, a tenderly sustained 'Let me wander not unseen'. Ashley Riches is resonant without bluster in the rollicking hunting aria, while 15-year-old Laurence Kilsby, in three arias, is the most vibrant, feminine-sounding boy treble I have ever heard. Pleasure in his performance

was mitigated only by some rather vague words.

Soprano Gillian Webster can also be consonant-shy. But her gentle, slightly veiled tone and broad phrasing are near-ideal for *Il Penseroso*'s rapt arias, above all her poised, *innig* singing of the magical nocturne 'Hide me from day's garish eye'. In *Il Moderato*, Webster and Ovenden combine beautifully in 'As steals the morn', while Peter Harvey's sympathetic baritone is an effective agent of conciliation in the minuet aria 'Come with native lustre shine'.

As ever in Handel, McCreesh paces and colours the music with an acute feeling for its specific *tinta*: say, the graceful, buoyant dance lilt of 'Come and trip it', the evocation of 'the far-off curfew' or the murmuring, secretive strings in the drowsy finale of Part 1 and 'Hide me from day's garish eye'. A word, too, for the eloquent obligatos from flute, horn, cello and, not least, William Whitehead's vivid performance of the organ concerto, using the full array of reed stops and pedals on the organ of Deptford Parish Church. My own favourite version of Handel's unclassifiable masterpiece remains that by Robert King, above all for the singing of Susan Gritton and its absolute completeness. But Handel lovers can hardly fail to enjoy the mingled finesse and hedonistic delight of this new recording, its attractions enhanced by a stimulating essay from Handel scholar Ruth Smith.

Richard Wigmore

Selected comparison:

King (10/99) (HYPE) CDA67283/4

Handel

Joshua, HWV64

Anna Dennis *sop* **Renata Pokupić** *mez* **Joachim**

Duske, **Kenneth Tarver** *ten* **Tobias Berndt** *bar*

NDR Choir; Göttingen Festival Orchestra /

Laurence Cummings

Accent © 2 ACC26403 (115' • DDD)

Recorded live, May 29, 2014



Comparisons may be odious but sometimes they are impossible to avoid. Laurence

Cummings made a live recording of *Joshua* at the London Handel Festival in 2008, and his performance six years later at the Göttingen Handel Festival was broadcast by NDR. The use of an entirely different crew of soloists, choir and orchestra means that Cummings's revisited version feels and sounds only slightly like his previous one, although it does a comparably excellent job at ensuring Handel's admittedly undramatic

oratorio crackles along at a theatrical pace. The Göttingen Festival Orchestra perform with marvellous flexibility: concertmaster Elizabeth Blumenstock and principal cellist Phoebe Carrai play intimate *concertante* duet passages in Achsah's 'Oh, who can tell' (one of numerous arias in *Joshua* that Handel based on old Roman compositions), and at the other end of the spectrum the orchestra prefer solemnity over mere bellicosity in the grand march illustrating the circumvention of the Ark of the Covenant.

Kenneth Tarver's precisely articulated quick passages in 'Haste, Israel haste' are impressive, although elsewhere there are slight hints of strain. Tobias Berndt's compassionate 'Shall I in Mamre's fertile plain' signals a baritone to watch out for. Anna Dennis sings with limpid ease in Achsah's 'O had I Jubal's lyre'; her delivery of the text sparkles gleefully and quick coloratura passages are treated intelligently as a natural part of the music rather than calling undue attention to themselves (it helps that the strings scamper merrily without formulaic complacency). Renata Pokupić's astutely characterised Othniel neatly sidesteps the fact that he is not an easy hero to bring to life – the chorus acclaiming his triumphant return from battle is much too rushed (the oratorio's most famous number 'See, the conqu'ring hero comes'). The disciplined NDR Choir produce mild un-English pronunciation on rare occasions (such as a Teutonic diphthong in 'Ye sons of Israel'). Contrapuntal harmonies in the lamentation 'How soon our tow'ring hopes are cross'd' are moulded eloquently, and the full-strength army reinforced by trumpets, horns and timpani unleash colossal grandeur in 'Glory to God'; it is easy to see why Handel's knockout blow impressed Haydn, who heard it at Westminster Abbey in 1791.

David Vickers

Selected comparison:

London Handel Orch, Cummings

(8/09) (SOMM) SOMMCD2402

Hough • Vaughan Williams

Hough *Missa mirabilis*

Vaughan Williams *Dona nobis pacem*^a

^a**Sarah Fox** *sop* ^a**Christopher Maltman** *bar*

Colorado Symphony Chorus and Orchestra /

Andrew Litton

Hyperion © CDA68096 (55' • DDD • T/T)



Hard on the heels of Robert Spano's impressively polished Atlanta account of

Dona nobis pacem comes this rival – and, to my ears, markedly more involving – version from Denver. Not only does Andrew Litton draw a terrifically agile response from his combined Colorado Symphony forces, he masterminds a reading which in its expressive urgency, arresting conviction and dramatic bite grabs the listener from the word go. At 3'06" in 'Beat! beat! drums!' (tr 2) just listen to the way those fearsome bass-drum thwacks so graphically echo Whitman's text ('So strong you thump O terrible drums'), and how majestically Litton paces the lofty processional that is 'Dirge for Two Veterans', its lump-in-the-throat resolution – where softly elegiac bugle calls yield to the choir's unforgettably compassionate last line, 'My heart gives you love' – so deeply affecting here. Sarah Fox's hugely imploring, memorably refulgent contribution puts me in mind of her towering display on Richard Hickox's superb recording of Kenneth Leighton's sublime *Sinfonia mistica* (Chandos, 1/09); Christopher Maltman, too, sings with unstinting integrity and intelligence, while Simon Eadon's engineering boasts striking impact, spread and amplitude. No RVW devotee should miss hearing this profoundly moving rendering.

The coupling, Stephen Hough's personable *Missa mirabilis*, was originally composed in 2006 for Martin Baker's Westminster Cathedral Choir; the present orchestral reworking was commissioned by the Indianapolis Symphony. It's a succinct, attractively melodic and rhythmically buoyant creation, with stylistic nods towards Poulenc in particular, and whose sparky setting of the central *Credo* imaginatively confronts the key questions of faith and doubt, innocence and experience. Suffice to say, Litton presides over another first-rate display. Incidentally, the work's epithet of 'mirabilis' is apt indeed: in his annotation Hough tells us that, halfway through writing it, he somehow emerged almost entirely unscathed from a horrendous car crash on the M1. A most rewarding pairing, this, and very warmly recommended.

Andrew Achenbach

Vaughan Williams – selected comparison:
Atlanta SO, Spano (4/15) (ASO) CD1005

Jacquet of Mantua

Surge Petre. Missa Surge Petre. Ave Maria. O vos omnes. In illo tempore...Non turbetur. O pulcherrima inter mulieres. Domine, non secundum peccata nostra

The Brabant Ensemble / Stephen Rice
Hyperion © CDA68088 (77' • DDD • T/t)



It has been fascinating to observe The Brabant Ensemble's campaign in favour of the many neglected composers of the mid-16th century. Next stop, Jacquet of Mantua (1483-1559). Director Stephen Rice presents a cogent analysis of the reasons for the neglect, and The Brabant Ensemble back him up with a very impressive programme, whose centrepiece is a six-voice Mass based on Jacquet's own motet *Surge Petre*. This is a weighty, substantial work, reminiscent of Gombert in its concentration. Just as impressive are the motets, ambitious pieces displaying considerable variety. The four-voice *O vos omnes* is deliciously focused and brooding, and the concluding *Domine, non secundum peccata nostra* monumental and full of strikingly retrospective touches (suggestive of a particular motivation for its composition). Two short three-voice motets further demonstrate the composer's range: within this programme, they have the air of miniatures.

The sound image seems slightly fuller in the Mass and its model than in the ensuing selection of motets, perhaps because of their richer six-voice scoring. Rice even-handedly states the case for thinking that this music may in its time have been performed by a smaller ensemble, with one voice to a part. That said, The Brabant Ensemble's centre of acoustic gravity is rather high for my taste. This impression is confirmed by the short pieces taken by the high voices alone, which don't constitute as great a contrast as one might anticipate. No doubt the sound recording and ambience have their role to play but one is left with an odd sense of mismatch (as though drinking a Trappist ale from a Kölschbier glass). That said, the beer really is first-rate. **Fabrice Fitch**

Lalande

Troisième Leçons de Ténèbres. Miserere

Sophie Karthäuser sop

Ensemble Correspondances / Sébastien Daucé
Harmonia Mundi © HMC90 2206 (76' • DDD • T/t)



The *Lessons for Tenebrae* by Michel-Richard de Lalande (1657-1726) are performed less frequently than those by François Couperin and Charpentier. Developed from the plainchant

Lamentations of Jeremiah used in the liturgy for Matins and Lauds on the last three days of Holy Week, Lalande's settings for solo voice and continuo show a more intimately understated aspect of his art than the celebrated *grands motets* that were popular at the Concert Spirituel. It is unknown when or for whom they were written but perhaps they relate in some way to Philidor's remark in 1729 that he copied out a complete cycle of nine *Leçons de Ténèbres* that was apparently for an Augustinian convent.

Ensemble Correspondances present a collection of only three lessons (one from each daily cycle) that was published posthumously in 1730, along with a setting of the psalm *Miserere*. In accordance with practices suggested in some historical sources, Sébastien Daucé's texturally varied continuo group of harpsichord, organ, bass viols and lutes inserts brief *ritournelle* interludes during sections, and bass viol countermelodies are added. Sophie Karthäuser's plangent singing covers a broad range of dynamic expression without ever obscuring a refined emotional essence, and tasteful embellishments always serve the meaning of the Lamentation texts. Her florid solo verses in Lalande's *Miserere* are juxtaposed with simple choral verses sung by a group of nine women. Plainchant antiphons are intoned ardently by the nine 'nuns', and frame Lalande's four pieces within a pseudo-liturgical context (these are selected from a source published contemporaneously in 1730). **David Vickers**

Lutz

Stabat mater. Salve regina. Ave Maria. Hoc est corpus, hokus pokus. There is a spell upon your lips. Two Love Songs

Copenhagen Chamber Choir CAMERATA / Martin Nagashima Toft

Dacapo © 8 224742 (66' • DDD • T/t)



Bruckner, Poulenc, Vilette, Elgar, Perotin, Mendelssohn: none of these

composers features on this recording but all are present in the drifting, magpie textures of Martin Lutz's choral works. As a jazz pianist and composer, Lutz (b1974) has a clear identity which his first foray into classical music unfortunately lacks. Uncertain of his own musical personality or point of view, Lutz tries on many styles for size. Twenty-three tracks later, however, and he's still no closer to finding his voice.

Themes of earthly and spiritual love unite an album that pairs a large-scale

Stabat mater with other Marian antiphons and some Shakespeare settings. While the short *Salve regina* and *Ave Maria* are both sweetly inoffensive (the former opening with a big nod to Holst's *Nunc dimittis*), the *Stabat mater* is more troubling – disregarding the violence and pain of its text to an almost wilful degree.

The work calls for soprano and tenor soloists, mixed choir, vibraphone, oboe and cello, an ensemble that clutters and confuses the ear, especially when solo instruments are placed so forward in the mix, relegating voices (and, crucially, text) to the background. The soft-focus, barely enunciated consonants of the Copenhagen Chamber Choir CAMERATA don't help, and the whole impression is of a Pietà swathed in wadding and dust-sheets.

The Shakespeare settings and the rather attractive *Hoc est corpus*, *hokus pokus* are more successful but never move much beyond fairly generic prettiness. Without grit, there's very little chance of a pearl, and nothing here comes even close to generating musical friction. **Alexandra Coghlan**

Nielsen

Songs for Choir

Ars Nova Copenhagen / Michael Bojesen

Dacapo 6 220569 (64' • DDD/DSD • T/t)



While Sibelius long held a deluded idea of himself as a 'man of the people', Nielsen actually was one – in both biological and musical terms. Nearly 300 'popular' songs flowed from Nielsen's pen: simple, strophic ditties, 'utility music that serves the framework of community singing', to quote Jens Cornelius's essential booklet-note. Young Danes still chirrup these tunes in the classroom; many form the backbone of *Den Danske Salme Bog* (a sort of Danish *New English Hymnal*). The fascinating truth about Nielsen's musical DNA is that he thought these pieces every bit as important as his symphonies and believed that 'the nucleus is the same in both'.

Certainly, these simple tunes can unlock many a greater truth in Nielsen's concert works. In that sense they wholly deserve the artistry of Ars Nova Copenhagen, who here sing 20 examples in SATB arrangements by director Michael Bojesen based on the piano accompaniments (three are Nielsen's own choral settings). It's open-throated singing that befits the direct intent of the tunes and their typically angular harmonies. Bases take care to tune the downward-stepping bass-lines that can

be many a choir's undoing, while the beautiful tapering of phrase-endings nicely serves the harmonic spice with which Nielsen often twists his stanzas to a close. There's a good spread of the naive, the charming, the folksy, the solemn and the humorously down-to-earth, including the touchstone 'Hvem sidder der bag skærmen' ('Jens the road mender'). Like Jens himself – Denmark's fabled everyman – Ars Nova never draw attention to themselves, though their distinctive Danish vowels and diphthongs are irresistible. Would you want to listen to 20 of these songs so plainly delivered in one sitting? In an anniversary year like this, if you've any interest in Nielsen, you should.

Andrew Mellor

Rossini

Petite Messe solennelle

Julia Lezhneva sop Delphine Galou contr

Michael Spyres ten Alexander Vinogradov bass

Christophe Henry org Accentus; Paris Chamber Orchestra / Ottavio Dantone

Naïve 5409 (77' • DDD • T/t)



There is a theory currently doing the rounds that the original 1863-64

version of Rossini's *Petite Messe solennelle* for four soloists, 12 voices, two pianos and harmonium was merely work in process: that the orchestration of 1867 was always intended. This is unlikely. The original accompaniments are crucial to the work's character and colour. The orchestration, which is as bland as the original is piquant, was essentially a commercial initiative: a bar on minor miscomposers getting their hands on the piece after Rossini's death.

Sadly the orchestration is often the version of choice nowadays, probably because it allows larger choirs to perform the piece. Chailly and Pappano have both recorded it. I prefer the Chailly and regret that Pappano, an able pianist, didn't choose to direct the original from the keyboard, as Wolfgang Sawallisch did in his superb 1971 Bavarian performance (Eurodisc, 12/85 – nla).

What distinguishes this latest recording is the fineness of the choral contribution. The 34-voice Accentus choir might almost be singing the original, so elegant is their (discreetly recorded) contribution. They are helped in this by the deftness with which the orchestrations are realised by Ottavio Dantone and his Paris chamber players.

Unfortunately Dantone's lightness of touch is also something of a limitation. Joyous as parts of the work are, it is

a piece shot through with grief and spiritual anxiety. We don't know precisely what occasioned its writing but both Rossini and Count Frédéric Pillet-Will, in whose newly built Parisian town house chapel the *Messe* was first heard, had occasion to grieve at this time. Breezing through the *Messe* as if it were some late off-cut of Rossini's former *opera semiseria* style simply won't do.

As for the not especially well-matched vocal quartet, there are distinguished solo contributions from tenor Michael Spyres and bass Alexander Vinogradov but both the soprano and the contralto seem tense and out of sorts. This is particularly so in the work's two concluding numbers, the calming 'O salutaris' and the spiritually riven *Agnus Dei*. **Richard Osborne**

Selected comparisons (1867 orchestration):

Chailly (2/95) (DECC) 444 134-2DN

Pappano (6/13) (EMI) 416742-2

Schubert

Die schöne Müllerin, D795

Pavol Breslik ten Amir Katz pf

Orfeo 737 151A (68' • DDD • T/t)



Now in his mid-thirties, Pavol Breslik has made his name primarily as a Mozart

and Donizetti tenor. On this showing he is also an attractive Lieder singer, if not yet a specially penetrating one. In the booklet Breslik cites Fritz Wunderlich's famous DG recording of *Die schöne Müllerin* as an early inspiration. Although his sappy, youthful lyric tenor does not quite have Wunderlich's liquid beauty of line, he shares the German tenor's ardent freshness and clear, unfussy articulation of the words. Like Wunderlich, Breslik presents an essentially robust, outgoing journeyman miller, unlike the more vulnerable, introspective Werner Güra, with Jan Schultsz (Harmonia Mundi, 12/00) and, even more, the haunted, disturbed Peter Schreier, with András Schiff (Decca, 5/91). From the opening 'Das Wandern', the early songs exude eagerness and wide-eyed wonder. In 'Ungehduld', the cycle's first climax, Breslik unleashes the full blade of his operatic tenor, with viscerally exciting top As. The climactic central 'Mein' has a similar open-hearted excitement, the yodelling quavers sounding like whoops of joy.

As the cycle progressed, though, I began to crave a wider range of colours, especially at the softer end of the spectrum, and a more concentrated inwardness. 'Pause', the cycle's pivotal song and arguably

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its subtlest, is consistently forthright (compare both Gura and Schreier here). 'Die liebe Farbe' is touching in its wounded tenderness and pathos. But the three final songs, litmus tests in any *Schöne Müllerin*, all lack what I can only, inadequately, describe as spirituality. I hear no change of tone colour or feeling when 'Der Müller und der Bach' moves from bleak minor to consolatory major. And the five verses of the valedictory 'Des Baches Wiegenlied' need more variety to justify Breslik's controversially slow tempo. Still, whatever my provisos, the gifted Slovakian tenor's directness, sincerity and vocal finish always give pleasure. Throughout, Amir Katz is an able and sensitive partner, vivid in picturesque details such as the mocking horn calls of 'Die böse Farbe', though the forward recording of the voice can slightly compromise textural clarity.

Richard Wigmore

Bror Magnus Tødenes

'Remembering Jussi'

Adam O holy night **Bizet** Carmen – La fleur que tu m'avais jeté **Giordano** Fedora – Amor ti vieta **Grieg** En drøm. Jeg elsker dig. Stambogsrím. En svane **Nordqvist** Till havs **Puccini** La bohème – Che gelida manina. Madama Butterfly – Addio fiorito asil. Tosca – E lucevan le stelle. Turandot – Nessun dorma **Rascel** Arrivederci Roma **Sibelius** Demanten på marssnön. Flickan kom ifrån sin älsklings möte **Sjöberg** Tonerna **Tchaikovsky** Eugene Onegin – Lensky's Aria **Bror Magnus Tødenes** *ten* **Håvard Gimse** *pf* **Norwegian Radio Orchestra** / **Ingar Bergby** Simax © PSC1338 (51' • DDD)



This first recital by a handsome young artist reclaimed from rock'n'roll by


crusading voice teachers will already be a hit in his native Norway. Internationally, of course, the competition is deafening. The 'Remembering Jussi' tag might prove a double-edged sword but Tødenes is not trying to rival Björling and the idea does provide for a wider selection of repertoire (and languages) than the standard production-line tenor 'hits' disc.

We should say straightaway – and resisting any 'odorous' comparison – that this is a voice at the beginning of its serious life, as witnessed by recent awards from Norwegian National Opera and the Salzburg Festival. Tødenes handles the four Puccini stormers rather well – the final sustained note apart, his 'Nessun dorma' is more faithful to the composer's original intentions than the Three Tenors

approach – and has plenty of juice for Giordano, Bizet and 'Arriverderci Roma' (which benefits from being taken absolutely straight).

The songs are more a matter of work in progress, work made harder doubtless by their being recorded alongside so much red-blooded *verismo*. The Sibelius items suffer in both text and intention by being pushed too hard – a couple of A/B checks remind one how the Björling discs convince through apparent effortlessness (aka years of having taken them on the road). The same could be said for Adam's 'O holy night', in theory a perfect closer, and Lensky's aria, at the moment better served by Björling's frozen golden tones than Tødenes's student Russian and simplicity. Good sound and song accompaniments from Gimse but orchestra and conductor are only at their most convincing in the best-known numbers. **Mike Ashman**

'English Hymn Anthems'

Bairstow Blessed city, heavenly Salem^a **HW Davies** O sons and daughters^a **Dyson** Praise^a **WH Harris** O what their joy and their glory must be^b **Ireland** Vexilla regis^a **Parry** Hear my words, ye people^b. Eventide^c **Stanford** O for a closer walk with God^a **Vaughan Williams** Lord, thou hast been our refuge^d. Rhosymedre^c **Whitlock** Jesu, grant me this I pray **C Wood** God omnipotent reigneth^b **Choir of King's College, Cambridge** / **Stephen Cleobury** *org* with ^a**Parker Ramsay**, ^{bd}**Douglas Tang** *org* ^d**Alison Balsom** *tpt* King's College   KGS0004 (73' • DDD/DSD • T)



I suppose there must be choirs of equal merit to King's

College but none has the unassailable advantage of making their music in one of the world's greatest buildings. The airy acoustic of the Chapel coupled with the fine Harrison & Harrison (mostly) organ help to define a peculiarly and uniquely English sound. These are especially suited to the repertoire on this fine disc, a collection of hymn anthems from 1890 to the 1930s, most of them owing their materials to *Hymns Ancient and Modern*. The first of these (also the longest at 14'42") is Parry's *Hear my words, ye people*, which uses passages from Job, Isaiah and the Psalms, including a brief but tricky treble solo (Tom Pickard with a voice of angelic purity), before culminating in a magnificent setting of 'O praise ye the Lord' (Henry Baker's tune *Laudate Dominum*).

Parry's work sets the tone for the whole disc, the techniques and colours exploited by Stanford, Bairstow, Whitlock and the other composers having much in common. The exception is the final piece, Vaughan Williams's *Lord, thou hast been our refuge*, a setting of Psalm 90 against which is heard 'O God, our help in ages past' (William Croft's *St Anne*) played on the trumpet, in this case by no less than Alison Balsom.

Douglas Tang and Parker Ramsay share accompanist duties at the tribune, while Stephen Cleobury leaves ground level for the organ bench, perched high above the choir, to give us two hymn-based solos by Parry and Vaughan Williams. The exemplary booklet by Nicholas Temperley (King's, 1952-59) offers a concise history of the English hymn anthem with background information and clear route maps for each of the 10 anthems, the texts of which are also provided. This is King's playing to its considerable strengths at all levels.

Jeremy Nicholas

'Italia'

Nono Sarà dolce tacere **Petrassi** Nonsense **Pizzetti** Tre composizioni corali **Scelsi** TKRDG. **Yliam Verdi** Ave Maria. Laudi alla Vergine Maria. **Pater noster** **SWR Vocal Ensemble, Stuttgart** / **Marcus Creed** Hänssler Classic © CD93 329 (72' • DDD • T/I)



South-West German Radio's 'country' series continues with a

varied selection of late 19th- and 20th-century Italian choral music. Given the dominance of opera in Italian musical life, the pool of repertoire available to chamber choirs is quite limited. However, these recordings – made over nine years and in a variety of acoustics – offer as good a survey as one might hope for, and exhibit impeccable singing of total passion, veering from the esoteric to the sublime (with some dubious rubbish thrown in).

Verdi's late *a cappella* pieces make a welcome contrast to the avant-garde offerings of Giacinto Scelsi and Luigi Nono. The latter's *Sarà dolce tacere* for eight soloists is extremely taxing for singer and listener alike. Soprano notes are plucked from the stratosphere, chords are clustered and broken up as some kind of vocal purgative. Scelsi's



The Choir of King's College, Cambridge: 'playing to its considerable strenghts at all levels' on a new collection of English Hymn Anthems

Yliam is even more provocative, relying heavily on extended vocal techniques. His *TKRDG* for six male voices, electric guitar and percussion has novelty value but little else.

It comes as something of a relief to sit back and enjoy Pizzetti's glowing *Three Choral Compositions* of 1943, which form the central backbone of this programme. The third, 'Recordare, Domine', is the longest and most powerful. Bizarrely, there are shades of Britten (the *Hymn to St Cecilia*, which – of course – would have been unknown to Pizzetti). Unfortunately the Verdi and Pizzetti tracks suffer from some low frequency heterodyne groaning, presumably from the conductor. This is especially distracting and annoying in the ladies-only *Laudi alla Vergine Maria*.

Malcolm Riley

'Music of the Realm'

'Tudor Music for Men's Voices'

Byrd Attend mine humble prayer. Haec dies. O Lord, make thy servant Elizabeth our Queen
Gibbons Almighty and everlasting God. Lift up your heads. O Lord in thy wrath **Morley** Haec dies. Laboravi in gemitu meo. O amica mea
Tallis O sacrum convivium. Videte miraculum
Tomkins Almighty God, the fountain of all wisdom. Turn unto the Lord. When David heard

Weelkes O how amiable. O Jonathan, woe is me. When David heard

The Queen's Six

Resonus © RES10146 (64' • DDD • T/t)



There's a very particular sound to this recording and it's one you can

trace partially back to Delphian's 2009 disc of *Lamentations* settings with the lay clerks of St George's Chapel, Windsor (DCD34068). Only two men appear on both recordings; The Queen's Six is a stand-alone (and far smaller) group that only claims to draw its personnel from the Windsor choir. Yet the unease of ensemble and curious blend of that Delphian release remain here – with only flashes of the plaintive keening and cumulative strength that made its predecessor odd but so very interesting.

The problem is plain and persistent: a light, straight (and also slightly breathy and 'hooty') alto sound that sits immediately on top of a first tenor with a gleaming edge and light vibrato, and concrete basses – voices that surely

wouldn't have been cast together in an ensemble that had a wider pool of singers to pick from. Gibbons's miniature masterpiece *Almighty and everlasting God* doesn't blossom, partly because the alto sound is too incongruous to appear in control (as the music dictates it should). That, and there's another strange hangover from the 'Lamentations' disc: a feeling of lament that becomes almost ubiquitous, even in the expression of heartfelt thanksgiving that is Byrd's *O Lord, make thy servant Elizabeth*. In that sense, much here feels led by 'sound' rather than by 'text' (words are often hard to decipher); it renders Byrd's *Attend mine humble prayer* and Gibbons's *O Lord in thy wrath*, among others, strangely directionless.

Full marks to The Queen's Six for unearthing some delicious and rarely heard Tudor works for men's voices and for their deft handling of the quickfire polyphony in Gibbons's *Lift up your heads* and elsewhere – that they can really do, with top-drawer tuning and rhythmic control. As it is, this would have made an attractive webcast; the superior focus of other ensembles makes it hard to recommend as a paid-for product.

Andrew Mellor

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GRAMOPHONE *Collector*

FRENCH SONGS AND ARIAS

Geoffrey Norris listens to a batch of discs celebrating the art of French song – both solo and choral – and opera

Composed in 1844, and not without a nod in the direction of Berlioz, **Félicien David's** *Le désert*, a three-part 'ode-symphonie', was one of the by-products of his wanderings in the Near East. Here the landscape gave him the impetus, on returning to Paris, to 'sing of the East', which he does in *Le désert* by means of actual melodies he heard while caravanning but, more often, by generally evoking the magic and mystery, the sunset and sunrise, the loneliness and liberation that he experienced. Theatrical effects come chiefly in the third number, 'La tempête au désert'; for the most part the work is one of contemplation, conjuring up a haunting, exotic mood. Listen to the 'Chant du muezzin' and you can

understand what it was about the expanses of the desert that impressed themselves on David's imagination. It was the work that made his name, and this fine performance by the male voices of Accentus together with the Orchestre de Chambre de Paris under Laurence Equilbey recognises its musical strengths, possessing not only novelty value but also atmospheric power. It comes in two versions here, one consisting just of the 11 musical numbers, the other with the spoken narration.

Poulenc links the next two discs, with five of his songs included in Alice Coote's recital, **L'heure exquise**. She begins with 'Les chemins de l'amour' and ends with 'Voyage', summoning up both the light-hearted and the inwardly reflective facets of Poulenc's musical personality. The disc takes its title from Reynaldo Hahn's 'L'heure exquise', a lovely, quietly floated song of love to which his scintillating, rapturous 'Les étoiles' provides a gorgeous counterpart. Ranging through Fauré, Gounod, Chabrier ('L'île heureuse'), Chausson, Berlioz ('Le spectre de la rose'), Saint-Saëns, Debussy, Koechlin and



Alice Coote offers an 'exquisite' collection of French songs on her new disc

Satie, this is a beautifully formed recital shining different lights on a central theme. It is distinguished by Coote's thorough absorption in the stylistic character of each song, conveying their individual sentiments and sensitivities with her rich, liquid mezzo and relishing the colouristic potential of the poetic texts. Graham Johnson's piano accompaniments are, as ever, wonderfully apt and complementary to the voice. Given the disc's title, the *mot juste* might simply be 'exquisite'.

Poulenc's religious music forms the greater part of the programme given by the superb Canadian-based Elora Festival Singers under their founder and conductor Noel Edison. The surreal, elliptical *Sept Chansons* launch the disc in a distinctly secular manner but from then on the G major Mass, the *Quatre Motets pour le temps de pénitence* and the *Quatre Motets pour le temps de Noël* reveal how Poulenc's characteristic compositional techniques and harmonies could furnish resonantly Catholic sacred music as well. Interestingly, the booklet-note for Coote's disc cites Poulenc's assertion that '[the

French] realise that sombreness and good humour are not mutually exclusive. Our composers...write profound music; but when they do, it is leavened with that lightness of spirit without which life would be unendurable.' That quality is something that comes across vividly in the Elora Festival Singers' performances, finely tailored and buoyantly expressive.

Chanson perpétuelle, the recital by the contralto Marie-Nicole Lemieux with Roger Vignoles and (in two songs) the Quatuor Psophos, takes its name from the last item in the programme, Chausson's setting of a text by Charles Cros. Followers of Lemieux's career and admirers of her glowing artistry will recall that in 2005 she pre-empted Alice Coote by releasing a disc called 'L'heure exquise'. In this new one, the prevailing mood is one of melancholy, leavened by such items as Koechlin's 'La pêche' and the first of Fauré's *Cinq Mélodies*. But Lemieux's voice is wonderfully adaptable to the different shades and contours of sadness and reflection as represented here by Hugo Wolf, four Rachmaninov songs sung with true Slavic passion and by Chausson's 'Chanson perpétuelle', in which Vignoles and the Quatuor Psophos combine with Lemieux in an ensemble of affecting tenderness.

Aficionados of French (or France-based) opera will also warm to **Paris, mon amour** by the Bulgarian soprano Sonya Yoncheva. Schooled in the refinements of Baroque opera by William Christie, she here broadens out into the Romantic repertoire, demonstrating that her rich, malleable timbre, control and sensibility open doors for her across a good range from Massenet to Offenbach, Puccini and Verdi to André Messager. As a sampler of her formidable gifts, this is a sure collector's item. **G**

THE RECORDINGS

- | | |
|--|--|
| | David <i>Le désert</i>
Accentus; Paris CO / Equilbey
Naïve © 2 V5405 |
| | Various Cpsrs 'L'heure exquise'
Coote, Johnson
Hyperion © CDA67962 |
| | Poulenc Chor Wks
Elora Fest Sgrs / Edison
Naxos © 8 572978 |
| | Various Cpsrs 'Chanson perpétuelle'
Lemieux, Vignoles; Psophos Qt
Naïve © V5355 |
| | Various Cpsrs 'Paris, mon amour'
Yoncheva
Sony Classical © 88875 01720-2 |

REISSUES

Peter Quantrill on three commemorative box-sets to mark composer-conductor Pierre Boulez's 90th birthday

Bon anniversaire, maître

The good and bad news about these three boxes of Boulez is that they act in happy complement to each other. Collectors will want all three, even if they already have RCA/Sony Classical's compendium (reviewed in March).

The set from Deutsche Grammophon most reliably conveys and supports the international image of Boulez as a high-priest of modernism, even as its booklet-note (Wolfgang Stahr) questions the image and opens a few doors into the empty cathedral. These are 'late' recordings, made in the last 20 years, but as a whole they don't convey the idea (common among conductors) of a slowing-up or a deepening, except insofar as, largely thanks to his work, they are now made with orchestras who are much more able and willing to play this music accurately and with conviction. Sound commercial reasons may lie behind the omission of Mahler from a box entitled **Pierre Boulez: 20th Century** – the complete cycle is available separately – but when Szymanowski is included, why not equally singular forays on disc into Scriabin and Janáček?

The focus falls on Bartók, Stravinsky and the Second Viennese School. These are the composers who Boulez said (in a 1958 article for an encyclopedia) would survive; the only surprise is the omission of Debussy. These six, along with Ravel and himself, are the composers to whom he has returned on disc and in concert time and again, even if more for outward-facing, didactic purposes than for the exploration of 'personal' insights which, he tends to suggest in both rehearsal and interview, is a redundant or outmoded concept with this repertoire.

Such difference as there is across the years may lie in his relationships with the

orchestras at hand. Ballets by Ravel and symphonies by Stravinsky with the Berlin Philharmonic do little to challenge the cliché of Boulez the cool analyst but many of the highlights in the DG box derive from his long and happy association with the Cleveland Orchestra: already, in Szell's days, an ensemble after his own heart, for which the 20th century's concertos for orchestra could have been written (and some were), and then trained by Dohnányi within the same tradition. With them he made his best Messiaen recordings – his third *Et exspecto*, a monument of magnificently controlled, cumulative power, his only version of *Chronochromie* – and his last, definitive Debussy (especially his beloved *Jeux*). Stravinsky's *Rite* is even more massive, still more contained, than in his Sony recording with the same orchestra (it's a peculiarity of record-company politics that his earliest and most radical recording, with the Orchestra of Radio France and briefly available on Ades, has not resurfaced), but *Petrushka* is another matter. I recall an LSO concert of such picture-book clarity it was as though Grandfather Pierre sat you on his knee with the score, opened it up, read the story and did all the voices – and the magic is still there in his last Cleveland recording.

Another highlight of the DG box is eight discs of Bartók from Chicago. These include not only brighter, punchier retreats of the ballets and *Bluebeard*, originally done with the BBC SO for Sony/RCA, but also piano concerto recordings with Zimerman, Andsnes and Grimaud that are far more accurate than the EMI/BBC versions with Barenboim. There is a late and welcome rapprochement with the Second Violin Concerto, which as an angry young man

Boulez had seen as the beginning of the end for Bartók. Others will want more vernacular sentiment, even raw passion, but for me the partnership with Gil Shaham is all about colour, cleanly cut, Fauvist: each phrase with its own shade.

Spend a fascinating hour on YouTube with him and the Vienna Philharmonic as they pick the bones out of Berg's *Three Orchestral Pieces*, Op 6, to appreciate how the security of a performance can be built from focusing on small but basic details. The love he has for these pieces communicates itself as readily as the music's own almost naive violence, its living of the space between Romantic and Modern ages just at the time when such spaces were so destructively roped off. Only the Sony box contains Berg's Op 6 – in two performances – and it's an essential work for his legacy; but so is *Lulu*, and his pioneering recording has in Teresa Stratas a heroine still unmatched for vocal/sexual allure. DG has also included the *Lulu Suite* with the Vienna Philharmonic from Boulez's last official recording which, as I noted in my original review (8/13), revels in a sumptuous orchestral and recorded sound stage no less intensely operatic in its way than the close pit-band atmosphere of IRCAM's studio occupied by the Paris Opéra.

Most of **Pierre Boulez: The Complete Erato Recordings** was recorded in the 1980s, in the studios of IRCAM and Radio France, with the kind of early digital sound that at the time was still a byword for how 20th-century music should sound. Schoenberg's concertos for piano and violin are close-miked yet distantly mastered, Peter Serkin unmannered in the solo piano part, but both Mitsuko Uchida (in the DG box) and Daniel Barenboim (on a new download





Making music because it matters: Pierre Boulez, the doyen of 20th-century modernism

from Barenboim's own Peral label) work with Boulez to loosen the phrases and find the Brahms in the piece.

The element of rhapsodic fantasy is likewise elusive in his recordings of Szymanowski and Ligeti (for DG), Berio and Ferneyhough (for Erato); the temptation is to say that it's not a part of his aesthetic make-up, until Dufourt's *Antiphysis* and Grisey's *Modulations* contradict the idea, gently but firmly. The Erato box is best for this cross-section of Boulez's approaches to his contemporaries such as Xenakis (*Jalons*) and Kurtág (*Messages of the Late Miss RV Trousova*): the only pity is that he could or would not be more wholehearted in championing the rest of their music. Listening to the only rival recording of Donatoni's *Tema* (on Stradivarius), it doesn't take long to realise what a difference his insistence on accuracy makes to the momentum and coherence of a work even when for many listeners the actual pitches will feel arbitrary. More personal enthusiasm is evident in the recordings of Carter and especially Birtwistle: *...agm...* (Erato) and *Secret Theatre* (DG) reveal their own debts to Boulez the composer through his readings of them, whereas Dohnányi (Decca) and Eötvös (Collins Classics) are both more prepared to convey the primal violence of *Earth Dances* in Birtwistle's later style.

The smallest box tells the most interesting story with exemplary documentation,

describing in both words and music Boulez's foundation of **Le Domaine Musical**, Parisian forerunner to the Fires of London, the London Sinfonietta and his own Ensemble Intercontemporain. Supported as they were by considerable private sponsorship, performances are well-prepared – the Domaine's own heritage lies in Schoenberg's Society for Private Musical Performances – but benefit from a tension that lies partly within the music, partly deriving from technical challenges for the musicians, and no doubt, in the case of the live performances here, from the frisson of audiences experiencing the shock of the new.

The presence of Darmstadt friends such as Pousseur, Nono and Stockhausen might be expected, as well as foundational influences such as Varèse and Messiaen, but Henze? The pointillist seven-minute *Concerto per il Marigny*, with Yvonne Loriod as soloist, salutes the newly built 250-seat theatre where the Domaine made its debut in January 1954. For some reason it pops up twice, on disc 4 and then on disc 9 as part of a complete concert led by Rudolf Albert and including the first performance of Messiaen's *Oiseaux exotiques*. To have read of Loriod's phenomenal virtuosity in music beyond Messiaen is one thing but to hear her play Berg (Sonata), Webern (Variations) and Boulez's own Second Sonata is quite another. There is much chamber music here (a supple and spacious

Verklärte Nacht with the Quatuor Parrenin and friends, Schoenberg's Serenade done with equal freedom), and also the famously exact South West German RSO performances of *Agon* and the Op 6 pieces of Berg and Webern directed by Hans Rosbaud which have done the rounds before. Comparatively little is 'directed' by Boulez but it includes his first recordings (for Vega) of both the Webern cantatas and *Le marteau sans maître*, in remasterings superior to those which have appeared on sundry out-of-copyright labels. Personal discoveries substantial out of all proportion to their duration include Schoenberg's three tiny but furious pieces from 1910 and Jean-Claude Eloy's shimmering *Equivalences* (1963) for 16 players. It's impossible not to be moved by the palpable sense here of making music because it matters. Boulez himself admits as much to Claude Samuel in the accompanying interview (and printed translation), even if, from his perspective, as a starting point on the route. ⑥

THE RECORDINGS

Pierre Boulez: 20th Century

Various artists

DG © (44 discs) 479 4261GB44

Pierre Boulez: The Complete Erato Recordings

Various artists

Erato © 14 2564 61904-8

Boulez: Le Domaine Musical 1956-1967

Various artists

Decca © 10 481 1510GB10

Opera



David Vickers listens to Boston Baroque's Return of Ulysses:

'It is always a pleasure to become reacquainted with the most under-appreciated of Monteverdi's three extant operas' ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 93**



John Warrack reviews Rodion Shchedrin's The Left-Hander:

'Valery Gergiev conducts a sharp performance, one fully alert to the satires that enmesh the work' ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 94**

Donizetti

La favorite

Kate Aldrich *mez.* Léonor de Guzman
Yijie Shi *ten.* Fernand
Ludovic Tézier *bar.* Alphonse XI
Giovanni Furlanetto *bass.* Balthazar
Marie-Bénédicte Souquet *sop.* Inès
Alain Gabriel *ten.* Don Gaspar
Dongjin Ahn *ten.* A Lord
Toulouse Capitole Chorus and Orchestra /
Antonello Allemandi

Stage director Vincent Boussard

Video director Olivier Simonnet

Opus Arte © DVD OA1166D; © OABD7165D

(3h 4' + 40' • NTSC • 16:9 • 1080p • DTS-HD5.1,
DTS5.1 & LPCM stereo • 0 • S/s)

Recorded live, February 14 & 16, 2014

Extra features: Interviews with cast and crew;

Cast Galleries



Like *Les martyrs* (see below), *La favorite* – which had its Paris premiere at the end of the same year (1840)

– was a reworking of existing material (*L'ange de Nisida*) in collaboration with Scribe. If you can buy into a huge chunk of Catholic guilt, the story is a strong one, almost contemporary in its focus on a heroine who becomes a kind of 'uncle target' for three leading men – genuine lover, royal seducer and priestly denouncer. The thematic influence on Verdi's *Trovatore* and *Forza* – chasing an impossible love across a landscape of war and religious prejudice – extends to the selection of scenes and their musical setting.

Vincent Boussard's production is traditionally costumed (but, helpfully, symbolically coloured) by Christian Lacroix and plays on some bare mirrored scenery (sets by Vincent Lemaire), which focuses the action refreshingly on the principals rather than faked-up historical architecture. Non-realistic chorus action in public scenes could have been more penetratingly choreographed. The ground production, and singing, are strong enough to cover some stiff, facially

inexpressive acting from Fernand and Balthazar – but Yijie Shi in particular sounds special, a real *Jugend-lyrischer* with good French. Kate Aldrich, last on our small screens as an attention-grabbing Adriano in a Berlin *Rienzi* (ArtHaus, 3/11), gives a very complete, committed and vocally able portrait of the victim Léonor, enthusiastically supported by Souquet as her maid/companion Inès (another precedent for this role in later Italian operas). Tézier makes for a suave, clearly acted Alphonse, the marker for Verdi's di Luna.

Even just after *Les martyrs*, the development of Donizetti's handling of French text and idiomatic emotion is impressive, emphasised by the score's greater formal fluency and through-composedness. Late Rossini seems a more obvious model than in the earlier work. Allemandi never ignores the music's grandeur but is able to keep things moving. The DVD is coherently filmed – although the director seems a little nervous of the mirrors – and recorded. It's a great pity that Opus Arte's booklet has no track breakdown to accompany the main note and synopsis. An important opera well worth getting to know. **Mike Ashman**

Donizetti

Les martyrs

Joyce El-Khoury *sop.* Pauline
Michael Spyres *ten.* Polyeucte
David Kempster *bar.* Sévère
Brindley Sherratt *bass.* Félix
Clive Bayley *bass.* Callisthènes
Wynne Evans *ten.* Néarque
Simon Preece *bass.* A Christian
Rosalind Waters *sop.* A Woman
Opera Rara Chorus; Orchestra of the Age of
Enlightenment / Sir Mark Elder
Opera Rara © 3 ORC52 (3h 28' • DDD • S/T/t)



The knotty gestation of *Les martyrs*, explained in impressive and patient detail

in Opera Rara's characteristically excellent documentation for this release, has traditionally been seen having left the work as neither one thing nor the other: too Italian for Paris, too specifically Parisian in form to have had a lasting wider appeal. When *Poliuto* failed to get past the Neapolitan censors, Donizetti reworked it into *Les martyrs*, expanding its three acts into four and recomposing all the recitatives – Eugène Scribe, no less, was on hand to adjust the text, returning to the same Corneille source used by Salvatore Cammarano's Italian libretto. At its (much delayed) 1840 premiere, the Parisian critics complained it wasn't French enough and it more or less sank without trace – living on briefly only in Italian translation. *Poliuto*, meanwhile, achieved a modest toehold of its own in the repertoire, not least in the 1960 La Scala production starring Callas, Corelli and Bastianini, variously available on disc.

Here Opera Rara has restored *Les martyrs* to its original splendour, Mark Elder conducting the new critical edition of the score in full, and with his love of the music shining through in every bar. Indeed, the conducting and playing are arguably the recording's greatest glory. The OAE's sound is wonderfully sparkly and transparent, everything beautifully balanced – listen to the playing in the three dances of the Act 3 *divertissement* to sample the sheer quality on display. The wind soloists are wonderful, taking the spotlight in several aria introductions. Elder's conducting is limpid and flexible, the *rubato* natural and seductive; I wondered only if he might have submitted more completely to the dramatic momentum as the Act 2 finale gathers a head of steam.

One can understand why Berlioz called the piece a 'Credo in four acts', though, and in its plot, the story of the Christian convert Polyeucte martyring himself in ancient Armenia, doesn't provide much scope for character development. Polyeucte's position is too fixed, while I pity any director trying to stage



Shedding fresh light on rare Donizetti: Mark Elder conducting the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment at the recording of *Les martyrs*

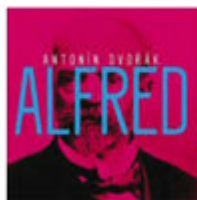
convincingly the almost comically swift eleventh-hour conversion of his beloved, Pauline – or, for that matter, their subsequent throwing to the lions. The most interesting character is probably Sévère, the proconsul in love with her but also determined to save him. But while the *grand opéra* set pieces are magnificent and the ensembles stirring, there are no arias to match, say, Léonor's 'O mon Fernand' in the contemporaneous *La favorite*.

There's no faulting the commitment of the singers here, however. As Polyeucte, Michael Spyres offers plenty of *bel canto* style and beautifully schooled phrasing – plus a remarkable interpolated top E. Joyce El-Khoury's tone can become a little occluded and is not flattered by the close-ish balance but her performance as Pauline is hardly less remarkable, and tireless in bringing the character to life. Similarly, David Kempster can sound a little woolly of tone as Sévère but he sings with nobility and finesse. There's fine support from the basses Brindley Sherratt and Clive Bayley, and the tenor Wynne Evans; the Opera Rara Chorus is on terrific form, too. Doubts remain about the work itself, then, but there's little doubting Opera Rara's achievement in letting us hear it sound so thrillingly fresh. **Hugo Shirley**

Dvořák

Alfred

Petra Froese *sop*..... Alvina
 Ferdinand von Bothmer *ten*..... Harald
 Felix Rumpf *bar*..... Alfred
 Jörg Sabrowski *bar*..... Gothron
 Peter Mikuláš *bass*..... Sieward
 Tilmann Unger *ten*..... Dorset/Bote
 Jarmila Baxová *sop*..... Rowena
 Czech Philharmonic Choir Brno; Prague Radio
 Symphony Orchestra / Heiko Mathias Förster
 Arco Diva © ② UP0140-2 612 (125' • DDD)
 Recorded live at the Dvořák Hall, Rudolfinum,
 Prague, September 16 & 17, 2014



The only explanation for *Alfred* is that it was a practice opera.

Dvořák's first attempt in the medium, it was written around 1870, 30 years before *Rusalka*, to an often-used German libretto that wasn't about to bring a greater Czech presence to the Provisional Theatre. Dvořák seems not to have made any great effort to get the piece performed.

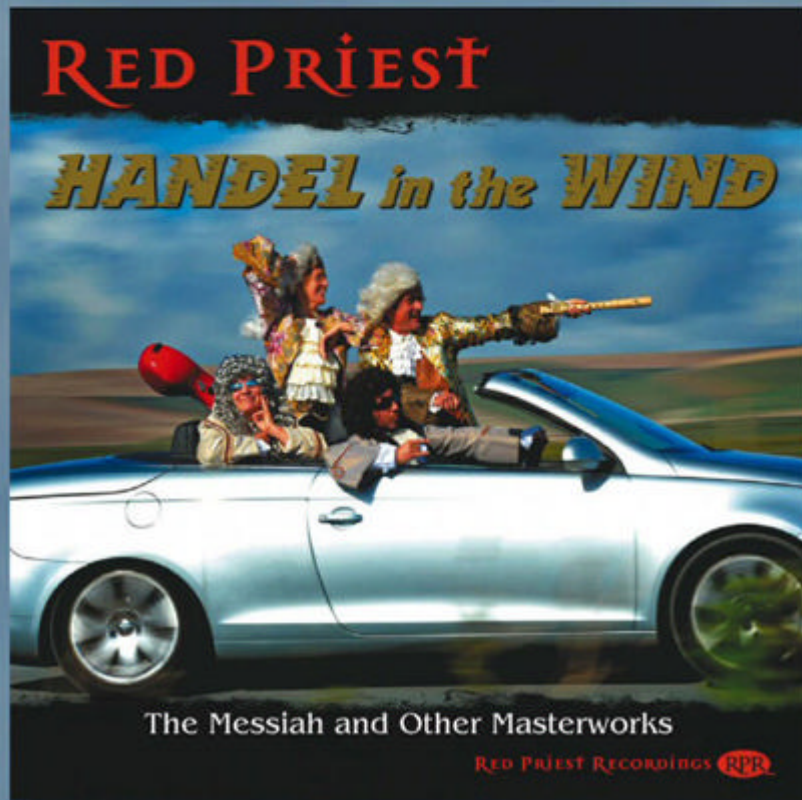
Karl Theodor Körner's libretto gave Dvořák a range of operatic clichés in a plot about warring ninth-century Danes and Brits (with a maiden caught in between)

which allowed the composer to echo, in various ways, *Tannhäuser* and *Lohengrin*. The former is reflected in a seemingly endless 15-minute Overture as well as an aria that wants to be 'O du mein holder Abendstern'; the latter showed Dvořák the kind of ensembles needed in a pageantry-heavy plot. This first-ever recording makes you wonder if the composer's operatic laboratory should have been kept private. A healthy academic interest is valid, though a better performance than this one is called for.

Oddly, *Alfred* mildly contradicts the conventional wisdom that Dvořák's operas suffer from lyricism over rhetoric. In fact, it is almost nothing but non-stop pronouncements and isn't very melodic at all, but has any number of well-sustained dramatic arcs. With great ingenuity, Dvořák heightens the operatic tension of any given scene by postponing a long-promised harmonic resolution in endlessly clever ways, maintaining further continuity with segues into the next dramatic event. Yet other moments have scenes ending without any proper sense of conclusion. Among the opera's many hot-headed confrontations between vaguely differentiated characters, the choral music is a cut above the rest and deserves to be heard: this is where the opera

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gains dramatic specificity and a more individualistic harmonic personality.

Conductor Heiko Mathias Förster deserves praise for revealing the vitality of the piece in a live performance where the performing forces wouldn't make anybody's A-list. The cast maintain dramatic tension in some stamina-testing scenes but this recording doesn't make you want to seek them out in the future. The orchestra sounds pretty thin. Still, the opera's nature is quite apparent – as the missing piece of Dvořák's creative progression.

The booklet promises an online libretto in German, Czech and English and is good to its word at arcodiva.cz. **David Patrick Stearns**

Monteverdi

Il ritorno d'Ulisse in patria

Fernando Guimarães *ten.* Ulisse
Jennifer Rivera *mez.* Penelope
Aaron Sheehan *ten.* Telemaco
Leah Wool *mez.* Minerva
João Fernandes *bass.* Il Tempo/Nettuno
Owen McIntosh *ten.* Giove
Sonja DuToit Tengblad *sop.* La Fortuna/Giunone
Krista River *mez.* Ericlea
Abigail Nims *mez.* Melanto
Daniel Shirley *ten.* Eurimaco
Daniel Auchincloss *ten.* Eumete
Marc Molomot *ten.* Iro
Christopher Lowrey *counterten.* ... L'Humana Fragilità
Sara Heaton *sop.* Amore
Boston Baroque / Martin Pearlman
Linn B ③ CD CKD451 (176' • DDD/DSD • S/T/t)



There is a thorny issue about how much (or little) of *Il ritorno d'Ulisse in patria*

(Venice, 1640) is actually by Monteverdi. Pioneering versions by Nikolaus Harnoncourt and Raymond Leppard in the early 1970s plastered reorchestrated 'realisations' on to the music that omitted only the kitchen sink – a philosophy later carried over to spiced-up imaginings by René Jacobs and Gabriel Garrido. Monteverdi experts are certain the composer's expectation was a limited band of just a few strings and continuo players.

Martin Pearlman's amiable essay observes that there cannot be a single 'correct' way to bring about an effective interpretation of this problematic score. In principle his performing edition inclines towards the anachronisms of the interventionist brigade but in practice he often values economical understatement. Orchestral parts have been composed to accompany singers in various scenes that present moments of heightened emotion,

and concise ritornellos are sprinkled copiously with recorders and cornetts (both unlikely to have been used in Venetian operas during the 1640s). Boston Baroque's large continuo group has two harpsichords, organ (using a reedy regal registration whenever Neptune sings), two theorbos (one sometimes playing a guitar) and a cello – although the copious use of melodic bowed bass in recitatives is contentious.

The cast respect the poetic eloquence and dramatic sense of Giacomo Badoaro's libretto, although recitation could have been more freely conversational. Fernando Guimarães as a multi-dimensional Ulisse exploits his rich middle register. Jennifer Rivera deftly conveys the predicaments of the long-suffering Penelope. The contrast between the kindly shepherd Eumete (Daniel Auchincloss) and the parasitical glutton Iro (Marc Molomot) is characterised vividly, and Aaron Sheehan's more effortless tenor suits the youthful Telemaco. The trios for Penelope's despicable suitors Anfinomo, Pisandro and Antinoo are aptly characterised but over-egged by some old-fashioned vibrato and approximate intonation; brief ritornellos between their attempts to draw Ulisse's bow would have been just as effective played by only strings (instead of the cornucopia of recorders and cornetts). Less satisfactory is the brief madrigalian passage featuring voices from heaven and the sea, which sounds like a grand operatic chorus warbling pompously from the bottom of a deep well. Pearlman's vision does not offer perfect answers but no individual performance has ever got everything right – and it is always a pleasure to become reacquainted with the most under-appreciated of Monteverdi's three extant operas. **David Vickers**

Purcell

Dido and Aeneas

Vivica Genaux *mez.* Dido
Henk Neven *bar.* Aeneas
Marc Mauillon *bar.* Sorceress
Ana Quintans *sop.* Belinda
Accentus; Le Poème Harmonique / Vincent Dumestre
Stage directors Cécile Roussat and Julien Lubek
Video director Stéphane Vêrité
Alpha ② DVD ALPHA706 (80' • NTSC • 16:9 • DD5.1 & PCM stereo • 0 • S/s)
Recorded live at the Opéra de Rouen Haute-Normandie, May 11 & 13, 2014



Dido and Aeneas strikes me as a piece that struggles to gain a great deal from modern-day opera-house

stagings. The very intimacy of it, its quirky dramatic pacing and the libretto's large-scale reliance on acquaintance with the story are all probable results of its origins as an entertainment for a small and knowledgeable audience, and offer problems to musical and stage directors alike that are often all too uncomfortably dealt with. In short, this is not a piece that takes naturally to the enlargement of scale a large auditorium demands.

The 2014 staging by Opéra de Rouen Haute-Normandie offered on the present release succeeds as well as any, while still coming across as somewhat distanced. Musically, it does what many do by beefing up the band with woodwind doublings and filling out the overall length of the show with additional dance numbers, though in this case even the extra Purcell is lengthened by improvised riffs and extensions.

Some go on a little too long but they are satisfyingly organic at least. And indeed this is a strongly convincing and stylish performance from a cast led by the dark but clear-voiced Vivica Genaux as a handsome, vulnerable Dido. Henk Neven's tone is heroic; and if his form is not quite as god-like as the libretto tells us, well, no man looks good while stumbling excuses to his lover. Ana Quintans's Belinda offers bright support, providing, as she should, much of the work's forward energy. Vincent Dumestre directs the adept players of Le Poème Harmonique and an offstage chorus with alert dramatic sense while remembering to honour the sensuousness of Purcell's music.

Sensual richness is also the main virtue of the production, designed by Cécile Roussat and Julien Lubek, not least in costumes with a rich Baroque look to them. The staging takes the libretto's many references to the sea as a keynote, and this corner of Carthage is populated by a wealth of mer-folk and monsters, wittily and often beautifully represented by an assortment of singers, dancers, tumblers and trapeze artists.

Marc Mauillon's strident sorceress, gloriously, is a giant octopus, and his/her comically malevolent harbourside scene with a host of other finny denizens of the deep carries a delicious hint of *Pirates of the Caribbean*. The sea itself is summoned by shimmering strips of silk, cunningly lit. On this mermaids gently bob, while in the production's most powerfully realised moment – the final lament, as it must be – Dido's own dress unravels to cover her over, an upraised hand the last thing we see as the famous ostinato drags her below.

Lindsay Kemp

Rossini

Guillaume Tell

Andrew Foster-Williams *bar*.....Guillaume Tell
 Judith Howarth *sop*.....Mathilde
 Michael Spyres *ten*.....Arnold
 Nahuel Di Piero *bass*.....Walter Furst/Melchtal
 Tara Stafford *sop*.....Jemmy
 Alessandra Volpe *mez*.....Hedwige
 Raffaele Facciola *bass*.....Gessler
 Artavazd Sargsyan *ten*.....Ruodi
 Giulio Pelligra *ten*.....Rudolph
 Marco Filippo Romano *bass*.....Leuthold/Huntsman
 Camerata Bach Choir, Poznań;
 Virtuosi Brunensis / Antonino Fogliani
 Naxos © 4 8 660363/6 (4h 12' • DDD • S)
 Recorded live at the Trinkhalle, Bad Wildbad,
 Germany, July 13, 16, 18 & 21, 2013



This 2013 'Rossini in Wildbad' production of *Guillaume Tell* is probably as fine an

achievement as any in the festival's 25-year history. It certainly outscores its most recent rival, the badly cut and indifferently realised 2010 Pappano *Tell*.

Naxos declares this to be the 'first recording of the complete opera'. Given that there is no single identifiable 'complete' version of the opera, this is at best a half-truth. The still superb 1972 Gardelli recording is, to all intents and purposes, complete. Indeed, it is more than complete. Using the officially sanctioned Troupenas Edition which was published to coincide with the work's premiere at the Paris Opéra in August 1829, Gardelli includes music that was cut (mainly for reasons of length) during the final weeks of rehearsal while the score was being printed.

Drawing on the 1992 Critical Edition and its appendices, the Wildbad production also conjures up a 'pre-premiere' text. Indeed, it goes one better by including the aria Rossini originally gave to Tell's son Jemmy before the arrow-shooting. Gardelli has this as an appendix, in a brittle, not to say flashy performance by Mady Mesplé. In Wildbad it is part of the unfolding drama, sung with sympathy and style by the gifted young American *soprano leggero* Tara Stafford. (Verdi's Oscar surely awaits.)

Naxos's own extensive addenda include a number of ballet music variants and, intriguingly, the finale of the three-act reduction which the Paris Opéra staged in 1831. This ends not with the great sunrise hymn to liberty but with a choral version of the overture's famous *pas redoublé*. To get the effect (it's pretty dreadful) you need to segue from the end of Act 3 to the final track of disc 4.

Andrew Foster-Williams's Tell was described by one British opera magazine as 'angry and ungainly'. On the evidence of this recording, he is neither. Gardelli's Gabriel Bacquier is the benchmark here but Foster-Williams marries an appropriately sympathetic theatrical presence with vocal production that is both focused and refined. Much the same could be said of Judith Howarth's Mathilde. Berlioz thought Mathilde's Act 3 aria 'cold and commonplace'. (It is often cut.) Here it is anything but. Howarth also brings a strong dramatic presence to such things as her confrontation with the dastardly Gesler at the end of Act 3. Michael Spyres's Arnold will do nothing to convince those of us with long memories that the art of *bel canto* is all but dead but he is pretty effective in moments of urgency and high passion.

Once past an over-inflected account of the Overture's meditation for five solo cellos, Antonino Fogliani's conducting is very fine. Each act is astutely paced and shaped, as indeed is the entire opera. Nothing in this intermittently folksy and picturesque score is allowed to hang fire. Equally Fogliani seems to understand that Rossini's confederates are not revolutionaries but conservatives devoted to re-establishing 'the old times, the old Switzerland'. The intrinsically peaceful gathering of the cantons at the end of the great second act is finely handled, not least by Poznań's Camerata Bach Choir, whose choral work is first-rate throughout.

The non-Francophone cast handle the French text competently, though Gardelli's set, which features Bacquier, Gedda, Caballé and others of that ilk, has the edge here; as does EMI/Warner's presentation which includes full texts and translations. As always with these Wildbad recordings, there is a certain amount of desultory applause between numbers (it's a small auditorium!). And there is some stage noise. The recording, by South West German Radio, is generally excellent.

Richard Osborne

Selected comparisons:

Gardelli (11/73⁸) (EMI) 640763-2

Pappano (10/11) (EMI) 028826-2

Shchedrin

The Left-Hander

Andrei Popov *ten*.....The Left-Hander
 Edward Tsanga *bass-bar*.....Ataman Platov
 Vladimir Moroz *bar*.....Alexander I/Nicholas I
 Kristina Alieva *sop*.....The Flea
 Maria Maksakova *mez*.....Princess Charlotte
 Andrei Spekhov *bar*.....English Under-Skipper
 Alexander Timchenko *ten*.....Count Kiselvrode
 Alexander Gerasimov *bass-bar*.....Special Courier

Mariinsky Chorus and Orchestra / Valery Gergiev
 Mariinsky (M) (2) (S) MAR0554
 (119' • DDD/DSD • T/t)



Nikolay Leskov is probably best known to English readers, certainly to English

music lovers, as the author of *The Lady Macbeth of Mtensk*, the basis of Shostakovich's opera; but Russians would probably single out *Levsba* ('The Left-hander'), in full *The Tale of the Cross-eyed Lefty from Tula and the Steel Flea*.

Essentially it is a satirical fantasy mocking both Russian and Western attitudes, with the brilliant Russian smith given the task of improving upon a mechanical flea almost too small to be seen so that a Russian deputation to the Court of St James can persuade the Brits of Russian technical superiority, while neglecting and even despising the clever craftsman. As Shchedrin puts it, a typical feature of the Russian national character: 'Innovative talent, resourcefulness...the eternal theme of power and the common man, the lack of demand for genius in the homeland.' Superfluous men, yet again.

There are indeed resonances here down the length of Russian history, and Shchedrin goes for his opportunities. Some are fairly straightforward: there is a brash send-up of the pomposity of Buckingham Palace but plenty of Slav nostalgia with folk instruments and, ironically, unaccompanied choral singing from the splendid Mariinsky Chorus mourning the inventor wholeheartedly – once he is safely dead. But the ironies are many-layered; and though these may seem to invite music, Shchedrin is sometimes defeated by them. He has much of the manner of Shostakovich at his most Gogol-like, and can hardly be blamed for not having quite such an individual acuteness of invention.

Valery Gergiev conducts a sharp performance, one fully alert to the satires that enmesh the work. The Flea itself is depicted by a nimble coloratura, Kristina Alieva, and its maker – something of a *yurodivy*, Russia's enduring Holy Fool – is affectingly sung by Andrey Popov. Vladimir Moroz sings eloquently as both Tsars, Alexander I and Nicholas I, strongly supported by Edward Tsanga as the Ataman (Commander) Platov, though Maria Maksakova goes rather over the top as Princess Charlotte. There is a hefty drinking contest in an impressive storm involving Andrei



Stefan Herheim's production of Verdi's *Les vêpres siciliennes* at the Royal Opera House, now on Warner DVD and Blu-ray

Spekhov as an English Under-Skipper belting out our national anthem in rivalry with the Left-Hander. The booklet has parallel Russian/English translations, with short (too short) essays also in French and German.

John Warrack

Verdi

Les vêpres siciliennes

Lianna Haroutounian *sop.*.....Duchess Hélène
 Bryan Hymel *ten.*.....Henri
 Michael Volle *bar.*.....Guy de Montfort
 Erwin Schrott *bass-bar.*.....Jean Procida
 Michelle Daly *mez.*.....Ninetta
 Jean Teitgen *bass.*.....Le Sire de Béthune
 Jeremy White *bass.*.....Le Comte de Vaudemont
 Nicolas Darmanin *ten.*.....Daniéli
 Neal Cooper *ten.*.....Thibault
 Jihoon Kim *bass.*.....Robert
 Jung Soo Yun *ten.*.....Mainfroid
 Chorus and Orchestra of the Royal Opera House,
 Covent Garden / Antonio Pappano
 Stage director Stefan Herheim
 Video director Rhodri Huw

Warner Classics ② DVD 2564 61643-4; ③ Blu-ray
 2564 61643-1 (3h 2' + 10' • NTSC • 16:9 • 1080p •
 DTS-HD MA5.1, DTS5.1 & LPCM stereo • 0 • S/s)
 Recorded live, October 2013. Extra features:
 The Making of *Les vêpres siciliennes*;
 The Ballet in *Les vêpres siciliennes*



Setting a grand opera on a grand opera-house stage costumed at the time of its premiere has been done before – but has rarely felt so apt as here. Then comes the novel icing on Stefan Herheim's cake: actually using 'les girls' from the obligatory grand-opera ballet throughout the show, representing (as I read it) the people of Sicily being plundered by the French invaders. It's both effective and – in Procida's Act 2 scene 1 vengeance aria – breathtakingly beautiful, like some impossible rediscovered 1850s video promo.

Given those parameters – which I guess would only offend seekers after recreated Sicilian medievalism – Herheim and his cast play things pretty straight in terms of telling the complicated (but so gripping) story. Also in the style of the period he allows his singers to act intentionally big. There's plenty of the arms up, clutching pounding hearts and looking up to Heaven that you're not allowed to do any more in drama class. That too works a treat here, especially from Volle and Schrott, where you can see the demarcation lines.

Musically we're on an almost permanent cloud nine. Pappano gets huge power and tension from the ensemble, and paces the long evening to perfection. Collectors may remember darker colours and more neurosis in Callas's old Italian performance than Haroutounian provides but, that apart, this is a pretty ideal line-up (and she gives a spirited reading of the huge role of Hélène). Volle and Hymel take us on an emotional rollercoaster through the Montfort/Henri encounter in Act 3 – one of the great (and still rather unknown) father/child discovery scenes in Verdi. Schrott's charisma makes him a natural leader of the belated Sicilian resistance – he is, of course, first seen as the ballet master, which sets up an interesting appearance in the final scene as the instigator of the actual Vespers massacre. Right through the cast list – including Daniéli and Ninetta, a kind of weathercock of Sicilian/French fortunes – and the increasingly versatile chorus, there's the highest level of commitment.

Sound and balance are good, and the filming has a real sense of the style of the show. An only grouse is Warner's booklet: lesser-known works need a track and who's-in-what-scene listing for reference without constant change of screen image. But...hugely recommended. **Mike Ashman**

REPLAY

Rob Cowan's monthly survey of historic reissues and archive recordings

Stokowski disc premieres: an unmissable treasure trove

Rare 78s of Stokowski's American performances transferred to CD for the first time

Just the other day I was luxuriating in the last of **Leopold Stokowski's** commercial Philadelphia recordings of the Love Music from Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde*, as impassioned a statement of purely orchestral Wagner as it is possible to imagine, skilfully knitted together by the conductor. But there are other Stokowski recordings based around the same or similar material, one of which, featuring the All-American Youth Orchestra which Stokowski and his associates formed for touring purposes in 1940, turns up in an expertly transferred Music & Arts collection of the AAYO's 'rarest 78s' (as the box cover has it).

Nowadays, with the musical accent placed firmly on the dictates of whatever score is to hand, Stokowski's strongly personalised recreations, with their rescorings, tweaked dynamics, prominent string slides (at least as heard on the vintage recordings), infinitely flexible

'I've always loved this boldly imperious view of Mussorgsky's Pictures'

tempos and occasional cuts, can seem a step or two beyond the borders of excess but, that accepted, couldn't we do with him now!

The present set opens with a heated account of Tchaikovsky's *Pathétique* Symphony which, cuts aside – specifically in the third movement – is more often than not enthralling. The first movement's 'big theme' is gloriously played by the strings – the AAYO's ranks were bolstered by numerous seasoned professionals

from major American orchestras – while the finale becomes a tearful embrace. Flexibility is the watchword throughout, each phrase leading on inexorably to the next. And there are the arrangements – most significantly, and aside from the Wagner, of Mussorgsky, a synthesis of episodes from *Boris Godunov* and most famously *Pictures at an Exhibition*, where Stokowski omits 'The Tuileries' and 'The Market at Limoges', in the main because he had grown to doubt whether Mussorgsky had actually composed them. I've always loved this boldly imperious view of *Pictures*, its bleak contours and uncompromising outspokenness, bluff, humorous and cumulatively grand, light years removed from the more elegantly crafted Ravel option.

And the arrangements don't stop there: Nováček's *Perpetuum mobile*, for example, which starts with an extended high G on the strings before ethereal quiet harps circle them Disney-style, and the nocturnal scamper gets going. Two versions of Stokowski-turned Tchaikovsky miniatures are included, involving both the AAYO and the Hollywood Bowl Symphony Orchestra: *Solitude* (the tragic song 'Again, as before, alone', Op 73 No 6), which in Stokowski's hands would probably have made even Max Steiner blush; and the piano *Humoresque*, Op 10 No 2, playful and reminiscent of Stokowski's *Pictures*. I've always thought that Stravinsky's fantastical *Firebird* ballet would have fitted *Fantasia* better than *The Rite of Spring* did, due largely to Stokowski's strongly atmospheric reading, which here suffers a significant cut in the finale.

Beyond the Wagner, which ends disc 2, we're treated to a plethora of shorter

pieces that make for an entertaining listening sequence, including numerous Stokowski 'only commercial recordings' of music by Schumann (a rather tawdry 'Träumerei'), Robert Emmett Dolan (the 'Glamour Waltz' from *Lady in the Dark*), John Stafford Smith (a very grand *Star-Spangled Banner* with Goddard Lieberman briefly declaiming 'Pledge to the Flag'), Irving Berlin (*God Bless America*), Paul Creston (*Scherzo* from his *First Symphony*), William Grant Still (infectiously upbeat *Scherzo* from his *Afro-American Symphony*), Henry Cowell (*Tales of the Countryside*), the Barcarolle from Offenbach's *The Tales of Hoffmann* and the Waltzes from Strauss's *Die Fledermaus*, some works involving the AAYO, others the HBSO. Perhaps the oddest item is a rather comatose-sounding Brahms First *Hungarian Dance* where a xylophone takes the role of a cimbalom, with questionable results.

Mark Obert-Thorn works his usual magic, although, owing to limitations on the original source material, some tracks emerge as more aurally palatable than others. Nothing is less than acceptable, however, and I would count this as a major addition to Stokowski's already sizeable 'compact discography', a gift to cherish and a valuable source of learning. Excellent booklet-notes by Richard Freed.

THE RECORDING



Various Cpsrs

CD Premieres of their Rarest 78rpm Recordings, 1940-46
All-American Youth Orch,
Hollywood Bowl SO /Stokowski
Music & Arts (M) (C) CD1287



Leopold Stokowski: never a slave to the score

Busch brothers' Brahms

Any recordings of Brahms's music by **Adolf Busch** are likely to be of interest, even if previously issued, and Guild's coupling of a 1951 Basle relay of the Violin Concerto (under Hans Münch) and a 1949 French broadcast of the Double Concerto under Paul Kletzki allows us a glimpse at a style that Joachim may well have recognised as emerging from his own (Busch studied with Joachim pupil Willy Hess). Then again, Bronisław Huberman actually was a Joachim pupil, and the evidence of his Brahms Concerto under Artur Rodzinski (an elevated if flawed 1944 radio broadcast on Music & Arts) is quite different, tonally more acerbic, more prone to *portamentos* and with a level of serenity in the quieter music (ie the soloist's angelic transition into the first movement's principal theme) that is quite unique. Busch favours a more gutsy approach; his is a rigorous reading, not always on the button technically but full of spirit and, as always with him, conceived along strictly classical lines.

But, good as the Concerto is, what makes this CD more or less indispensable is the performance of the Double Concerto with Adolf's cellist brother Hermann, especially the central *Andante* which eschews overt emotion for something altogether more intimate, the closing pages especially beautiful. In the Busches' hands, Brahms's consolatory essay becomes a true song without words, and the finale reclaims its dancing spirit, which is so often lost on other performers. It's not perfect by any means but a breath of fresh air. Good transfers.

THE RECORDING



Brahms Violin Concerto.
Double Concerto
A & H Busch
Guild Ⓟ GHCD2418

Enescu in New York

Both Adolf Busch and his son-in-law Rudolf Serkin were superb interpreters of Beethoven's music and I was delighted to encounter a pre-war New York Philharmonic Symphony broadcast of the youthful Serkin on top form bringing tempered excitement to Beethoven's *Emperor* Concerto. The conductor is none other than **George Enescu**, the context a double-pack on the Opus Kura label featuring New York concert performances from 1937 and 1938.

It opens with Mozart's *Figaro* Overture, energetic but not overly swift, then proceeds to the big G minor Symphony which, although the tempo for the opening *Molto allegro* passes on breathless excitement, features some dramatic dynamic contrasts, especially in the development section, where the string choirs lunge at each other with real fury. The weightily expressed *Andante* is pretty broad but both the Minuet and finale kick up a storm. Viewed overall, it is a G minor to rank alongside the best of its historic rivals. Enescu's Romanian heritage is represented not by his own music but by a folk-like work by Ion Otescu (1888-1940), excerpts from *De la Matei citire*. Deems Taylor offers an intermission talk about Enescu and the

second CD opens with a work that Enescu recorded in London 10 years later, Schumann's Symphony No 2. What most surprised me about this particular performance is its frequent similarity to two other New York relays, under Arturo Toscanini, though Enescu's tempos for the last two movements are notably slower than Toscanini's. Elasticity is another shared virtue; and while the compromised sound stints on detail, it's good enough to convey the broad picture of another remarkable performance.

THE RECORDING



Beethoven. Mozart.
Otescu. Schumann.
Orch Wks **Enescu**
Opus Kura Ⓟ Ⓢ OPK2112/3

Stravinsky and Glazunov

Composers conducting their own music don't always hit the target but a Pristine Audio CD coupling works composed and conducted by **Stravinsky** and **Glazunov** shows both musicians excelling in both roles. The gem is Glazunov conducting a studio (ie 'symphony') orchestra in 1929 at the Portman Rooms in London's Baker Street in his ballet *The Seasons*, a performance of rare beauty, the sound quality astonishingly good (another Obert-Thorn showpiece). I've a suspicion that some front-ranking players were involved, especially the lead clarinet (Charles Draper, perhaps?), while Glazunov's handling of the excited close of 'Summer' would stand comparison with the best available today. Only the heady Bacchanale that opens 'Autumn' lingers somewhat.

Stravinsky's *Petrushka* and *Pulcinella* excerpts date from the late 1920s/early 1930s and were recorded in London and Paris respectively. *Petrushka* features lightning reflexes and, though hardly as well drilled as Stravinsky's later versions, offers a more vivid view of the music. There's less of *Pulcinella*, just five movements in fact, but the playing is often excellent and the sound, again, surprisingly good for its advanced years, if not quite so good as on the Glazunov. Not revelatory in the way that *The Seasons* is but useful to have. Ⓢ

THE RECORDING



Glazunov Seasons **Stravinsky**
Petrushka. Pulcinella (excs)
Glazunov; Stravinsky
Pristine Audio Ⓢ PASC432

Books



Peter Quantrill enjoys a scholarly, intelligent study of Brahms:

'Perhaps it had to be Brahms who would once and for all not so much blur as obliterate the distinction between public and private music'



John Warrack on a comprehensive tribute to Sir Charles Mackerras:

'The Czech Philharmonic embraced him as one of their own, and his are still the recordings one turns to first'

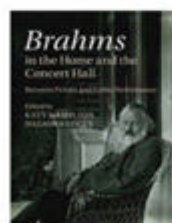
Brahms in the Home and the Concert Hall

Between Private and Public Performance

Edited by Katy Hamilton and Natasha Loges

Cambridge University Press, HB, 424pp, £65

ISBN: 978-1-10704-270-4



The cover does the job for me. An unusual and delightful photo, showing Brahms relaxed, in private but still inscrutable. The image isn't cleaned up but has a character all its own, viewing a well-loved subject in an unfamiliar light. What you see is what you get, and then some, with this invaluable study of the composer and his assured place in the culture of *Hausmusik*.

Perhaps it had to be Brahms who would once and for all not so much blur as obliterate the distinction between public and private music, not only because he sometimes appeared to be born after his times – what a Kapellmeister he would have made! – but, being reportedly and repeatedly incapable of saying private things in private, let alone public, he wrote them in his music instead: his feelings about Schumann in the First Symphony, about his mother in the *German Requiem*, for Clara, seemingly everywhere. The point is neatly made by Michael Musgrave in his introduction, showing how the broad, cello-led second theme of the first movement of the Second Symphony is a minor-key variant of 'the Brahms Lullaby', that seemingly unavoidable *Wiegenlied* (once piped to us in a lift or down a phone, is it private or public, or merely invasive?).

It seems obvious that a given instrumentation would give form not only to the scale but the shape of a piece, but Brahms messes up such neat distinctions, and this is what Katy Hamilton addresses in a consideration of the vocal quartets, often dismissed as slight because explicitly domestic in function and therefore rarely encountered in concert. Her work of

restitution goes beyond the paying of scholarly attention to the *Liebeslieder* and the *Zigeunerlieder* to deal with Brahms's own uncertainty over an issue central to all his music and its performance today: how abstract is it? His correspondence and Simrock's carefully designed title-pages hint at a late movement on Brahms's part towards a synthesis of 'Ton und Wort'.

Heather Platt looks deeper into the notes and gestures of the 'feminine' songs, at how Brahms gendered his settings, whether or not he knew it, with a folk style.

Perhaps it's too easy to connect (and contrast) these innocent and demure maidens with the faithful wives, ardent fans and cultured women who surrounded him and took charge of the soirées that are the principal performing milieu of this volume. We are invited to General von Moltke's parlour, to Gladstone's dining room and upstairs to Tennyson's den, all in the company of Joachim. Valerie Woodring Goertzen prompts a re-evaluation of Joachim the composer through Brahms's piano arrangements of his overtures and in so doing reveals how Joachim's Lisztian leanings toward the realisation of Shakespearean topics may have worked backwards on Brahms.

Hamilton and her co-editor Natasha Loges have rounded up a congenial group of scholars and thinkers, all with new things to say: Robert Pascall on the care Brahms took over his own piano arrangements of the orchestral works; Markus Böttgeman on the politicised associations of good *Hausmusik* with German Nationalism; Styra Avins digging through Wittgenstein family correspondence to unearth a portrait in words and pieces of the composer late in life. Addressing the cultural dialectics of chamber music with the help of much pertinent visual illustration, Richard Leppert gathers in the sharp sense of loss experienced by those on the cusp of a new culture. What on earth could Adorno and Clara Schumann have had in common? Their primary experience of music was not through listening, or reading – these were little more than preludes to the act of

playing, and doing so with a friend or relation, in four-hands arrangements. Most of us must content ourselves at third hand with the compendious effort on Naxos by Silke-Thora Matthies and Christian Kohn to record Brahms interpreted by Brahms, so to speak, and these recordings can be heard in a fresh light through the prism of this book.

The rediscovery of a particular old, intelligent way of living with music begets a similarly elevated tone of scholarship. The key signature here is not analysis of the same, well-tilled soil, sifting the arguments to be supported or dismissed, but an enthusiastic sharing of rare learning for its own sake. That the various writers on their different topics come to broadly common conclusions seems the result of a happy confluence of minds rather than a conscious effort on the part of the editors. Few books on 19th-century music have told me as much or afforded such pleasure in the reading of them. **Peter Quantrill**

Charles Mackerras

Edited by Nigel Simeone and John Tyrrell

Boydell Press, HB, 336pp, £25

ISBN: 978-1-84383-966-8



There must be many record collectors who treasure the classic Decca series of five Janáček opera recordings with the Vienna Philharmonic, the orchestra which the company decided would make a suitably 'smooth' balance to their chosen conductor, the allegedly 'rough' Charles Mackerras. And many must have felt unwilling to dispose of the LPs even when more convenient CD versions became available, since the format made it possible for lavish booklets to include large scale pictures (with the cartoon drawings for *The Cunning Little Vixen*) as well as long, illuminating essays by our leading Janáček scholar, John Tyrrell. Both Mackerras and Tyrrell have been awarded



Charles Mackerras outside the Royal Opera House in March 1968: he conducted there regularly from 1964 but was passed over as Colin Davis's successor

a rare honour for foreigners, Czech honorary doctorates; and now Tyrrell and Nigel Simeone, colleagues with Alena Němcová on the catalogue Janáček's Works (Oxford: 1997) have produced the present book. Part anthology, part biography, part memoirs by colleagues, part catalogue of performances and recordings, it has an attention to detail coupled with liveliness that its subject would have approved of.

Certainly Charles also had a generous dash of Aussie toughness in his make-up. I remember long ago as a student oboist playing in the pit band he conducted in the earliest days of the Welsh National Opera, and getting no quarter from the man who had been Principal Oboe of the Sydney Symphony Orchestra. He was always right, also huge fun to work with. Other encounters brought similar rigour, always in the interests of the music, and once an uncovenanted gesture of much warmth. There are several accounts in this book of him at work, sparing nobody and least of all himself: by David Lloyd-Jones, whom he helped get appointed to found Opera North; by Patrick Summers, who worked closely with him at San Francisco Opera; by Simeone, with a wide-ranging, well-documented account of his career; and not least by Tyrrell, the two of them squirrelling in Janáček's barely

decipherable scores to reach his real, sometimes surprising, intentions. I did not know, until this book, that the reason why Charles invariably conducted with a score was so as to be alert to spotting something that had never before occurred to him.

He was a real scholar as well as a conductor, and though he could drive singers to distraction with his insistence on the use of appoggiaturas in Mozart, they always acknowledged his case. He was also undoubtedly one of the great Mozart interpreters of his day – Alfred Brendel chose him for a series of six concerto recordings, including the last he made, the E flat K271 – and many preferred his strong, incisive attack to the eloquence of another great Mozartian, Colin Davis. There was an undertow of rivalry here, never quite brought into the open in this book, largely stemming from Davis being given the British premiere of *The Cunning Little Vixen* at Sadler's Well in 1961.

By then, Mackerras was already established as the name to be thought of in connection with Janáček, and he had a forgivable feeling of propriety. Perhaps more than any other single conductor, he helped to establish Janáček as a great composer, and to confirm this even among Czechs themselves, who were at first a little startled by his rugged, impassioned but

always lucid approach. But the Czech Philharmonic – whom he could rehearse fluently in their own language – embraced him as one of their own, and his are still the recordings one turns to first for an authentic view of Janáček.

But his range was wide, embracing Strauss and Wagner as well as Handel, Gluck and Haydn, not to mention Sullivan, whose music he arranged for an early ballet, *Pineapple Poll*; and like few other conductors he understood the minutiae of how an opera house works. His attention to detail extended not only to securing and carefully marking historical sets of orchestral parts, but even to knowing to be careful at a certain point as the first horn had a difficult page turn. Understandably, he was disappointed at never having an orchestra entirely his own, for all the warmth and productiveness of his association with the Philharmonia, let alone a major opera house. He was sad at being passed over as Davis's successor in favour of Bernard Haitink at Covent Garden, where he had conducted so many fine performances. They are listed here, including in a full discography by Malcolm Walker. It makes impressive and enticing reading; but the whole book is a captivating memoir of a great musician and an enlivening man. **John Warrack**

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David Patrick Stearns
and **Mike Ashman**
discuss the merits of
Elisabeth Schwarzkopf's
classic 1965 recording
of Richard Strauss's
Four Last Songs



R Strauss

Four Last Songs

Elisabeth Schwarzkopf *sop* **Berlin Radio**

Symphony Orchestra / George Szell

Warner Classics (M) 087318-2 (57) • ADD

Originally released as Columbia SAX5258

A heavenly record, so beautiful I find it goes against the grain to analyse. Schwarzkopf did the *Four Last Songs* some 12 years ago when she coupled them with the closing scene from *Capriccio*, a very happy linking of late Strauss music.

In the *Four Last Songs* of course the rivalry between Schwarzkopf and

della Casa [Decca] is keener, and the contrasts again remain very much as expected with della Casa (then at the peak of her form) brighter and more extrovert, Schwarzkopf finding an 'inner' quality, interpreting not merely the fairly conventional words but the emotional implications behind this glorious swan-song of a dying composer. Take the final phrase of the last song 'Im Abendrot' ('Ist dies etwa der Tod?') when not only Schwarzkopf but Szell and the Berlin Radio orchestra achieve a hushed intensity quite beyond their rivals. Apart from failing to

achieve a true *pianissimo* at the end of 'Beim Schlafengehen', Szell conducts beautifully throughout, and it illustrates once again his surprising ability to change style with his surroundings, far more militant in Cleveland than he is in Europe when mellow romanticism seems to take hold of him (compare the extraordinarily different accounts of Brahms's First Piano Concerto with Fleisher and Curzon respectively).

Enough to say here that I cannot imagine more honeyed playing, and the warmly reverberant acoustic adds greatly to the beauty. **Edward Greenfield** July 1966

David Patrick Stearns With dozens of other available recordings of the *Four Last Songs*, the 1965 Schwarzkopf/Szell has maintained a consistent following, even a classic status for roughly 50 years. Schwarzkopf's stock rises and falls while each digital remastering reveals that her art wasn't as seamless as it appeared when the recording first arrived on LP. Szell's posthumous reputation is good but not wonderful.

Yet the two together created something that seems to transcend so much, something that stands apart from their other work over their long respective careers, even with the arrival of *Four Last Songs* recordings by Gundula Janowitz and Jessye Norman, not to mention other Schwarzkopf recordings that include her first 1953 outing for EMI as well as live concerts that have been published over the years. None of them, though, are comparable with Schwarzkopf/Szell, from the celestial ambiance of the Berlin Radio Symphony to the detail of Schwarzkopf's word colouring. Where does this recording stand in your cosmology?

Mike Ashman When I had a summer job at a large London Oxford Street record store

few of the disputes about recordings by a committed counter staff were as heated as the ones about this performance. The naysayers found the delivery of the texts mannered and coy, and the balance and the pacing slow beyond the soprano's best capabilities. Also, was the recording actually that good technically – could you hear Schwarzkopf well enough? They turned their support to the earlier della Casa/Böhm performance on Decca – swifter, straighter (none of the words made a meal of, not even at the end of 'Im Abendrot') and with the singer comfortably heard against the orchestra. Then we all rediscovered the earlier Schwarzkopf recording you allude to which, under Otto Ackermann, seemed to have many of those same virtues as the della Casa.

In a 1995 *Gramophone* interview Schwarzkopf talked about that early version: 'The voice is much younger. I don't think the first one is better, although one hears in the second that it is a mature sound, but then the poems are not for a young creature...it is never a girlish sound, it must suggest maturity, if anything. To look back at all seasons of life, and not

be a spring-like noise. No, I'm very satisfied with that of course...'

DPS To me, Schwarzkopf/Szell is the summit of her discography, but it's so radically different from her previous recording that I have trouble comparing them. The earlier one feels like a documentation of a performance: the voice is very consciously projected, there's even a bit of labour in the upper range, as well as closer-to-the-surface, almost-operatic emotionalism at times. The second recording doesn't just show her evolution as a singer and interpreter, but as a recording artist. She uses the microphone in ways that suggest she's singing directly to you. Where some people hear mannerism, I hear an artist who cares greatly about delivering the text with colour, and doing so with the luxury of lower-stress vocalism that's perhaps only possible in the studio where she had no worries about projecting over the full orchestra.

One of my big discoveries upon examining the score is that there are next to no performance markings for



George Szell in a recording session with Elisabeth Schwarzkopf; Schwarzkopf was inspired by Szell's approval

the vocal line. Who knows why? More than usual, phrase shaping must come from the singer's intuition. Of course, the orchestral writing is full of dynamics that any sensible singer would heed in the formulation of an interpretation. But with a voice of Schwarzkopf's size (small compared to Kirsten Flagstad before her and Jessye Norman after her), might one be able to appreciate that shaping outside the recording studio? Ultimately, what's good for Schwarzkopf is also good for the piece itself, allowing her to project an elegiac, serene aura. How close do you think she came to achieving this in the live recordings?

MA The live accounts that have been released on major labels confirm your summary of the versions above as a move from a 'concert' to a 'studio' interpretation. The 1956 Karajan/Philharmonia is much the lightest and quickest version, 'Frühling' almost a soufflé compared to what is to follow and 'Im Abendrot' proving it can make its point without the Wagnerian weight and breadth (it's nearly two full minutes quicker than the Szell recording). Already though (and this is of course one of this singer's great strengths, though not always appreciated as such at the time) Schwarzkopf is interpreting

and colouring the text far more than many rivals – she makes the narrator of 'Beim Schlafengehen' sound really weary and the character of the garden in 'September' actively sad at the arrival of autumn. By 1962 in Salzburg with István Kertész and the Berlin Philharmonic – or perhaps in spite of them, scale-wise – Schwarzkopf is continuing to come at these songs vocally from an altogether more intimate, Lieder recital direction. This can have disadvantages: in 'September' she's working so hard on the vowels that the actual lyric sometimes becomes unclear, a problem not wholly resolved three years later in the Berlin studio. And the tempos she works in are becoming gradually slower to allow room for more detail. This 'Im Abendrot' at 7'44" takes nearly the eight-plus minutes she uses with Szell.

DPS Tempo is one of the most appealing elements of the Szell recording: the expansiveness gives a feeling of peering into eternity. But I can't imagine Schwarzkopf sustaining those tempos while projecting into a concert hall; 'In dümmigen Grüften', she freely admitted, required her to start the piece in the weakest zone of her voice. Yet her studio tempos have spoiled me for other Schwarzkopf live recordings; they feel rushed and unsatisfying. So tempo is

maybe a key element that, again, makes this performance a unique product of the recording studio.

Also, does any other Szell recording sound like this one? Those lush sonorities are anything but the kind of pinpoint Urtext performances he cultivated with the Cleveland Orchestra. I recently stumbled across a live 1959 *Four Last Songs* with Szell, the Concertgebouw Orchestra and Sena Jurinac that has some family resemblance to Szell's later effort with the string blends, so I can't accuse him of becoming Schwarzkopf's 'Stepford' conductor. Do correct me if I'm wrong, but the Berlin Radio Symphony Orchestra wasn't Europe's most exalted ensemble. Yet I can't complain about the quality of the playing. Was this recording some moment of grace for all parties concerned?

MA Szell certainly didn't think it one of Europe's most exalted ensembles and apparently told Legge at first that they just couldn't play it. (It was Fricsay's old orchestra, the RIAS, now renamed.) I think the results are good for several reasons. Schwarzkopf was inspired by the approval of Szell (she regarded him as a great voice expert); she and Legge enjoyed working out of London for a change with a new German engineer; Szell was always more relaxed (and Romantic) in Europe – and was, to my mind, a great and significant Strauss interpreter after much collaboration with the composer. Also, as we have seen, the sessions came at a climactic point for Schwarzkopf's reinterpretation of the music – she found a way in the studio to convey both the Lieder-like colourings she was so good at and not to miss out on the Romantic angst that may have come easier to heavier voices like Flagstad and Norman.

DPS Legge and Szell. Those two must have been like Godzilla vs King Kong. Seriously, though, some of our colleagues don't respect performances that couldn't have existed outside the studio. My feeling is that however real or artificial it is, the recording has added greatly to the piece's performance history. Can you live with loving this recording?

MA It has certainly added significantly to the piece's performance history. The fact that it *is* a recording is no worry at all: it's a classic example in microcosm of Schwarzkopf's and Legge's music-making in song. However, while my respect remains huge, I would always want to hear both younger and heavier voices in this score as well. **G**

THE SPECIALIST'S GUIDE TO...

British royalty in music

The lives of our royals have often sparked creativity says **Jeremy Nicholas** who, following on from the recent media interest in our Royal Family past and present, suggests 10 works inspired by royalty

Royalty and classical composers have been intimately linked for centuries. Patronage, dedications, court dances and state occasions have inspired (or at least yielded) innumerable works. It is something that the British are particularly good at – they have had, to be fair, longer to get it right than most other nations, more opportunities to develop the genre. (It's a semantic oddity that a composer is paid a royalty for a piece about royalty.)

The title of Master of the King's or Queen's Musick is an honoured one stretching back to Charles I in 1626. The number of coronation marches and anthems must vie with the number

of funeral odes, birthday greetings and pageants composed for British monarchs since Tudor times. This guide, however, is not concerned with these, rather the portrayal in music of various sovereigns inspired by works of literature.

The British royal lineage itself has not been overly blessed with musical aptitude. The monarch rarely reveals his or her personal taste in music. Queen Victoria's Consort (a German, of course) showed some compositional skill. Though an admirer of Mendelssohn, his wife was no Handelian ('Handel always tires me, and I won't pretend he doesn't') and was conservative in her tastes. 'What is that?'

she asked after a performance of a piece of modern music that clearly did not appeal to her. 'It's a drinking song, Ma'am, by Rubinstein.' 'Nonsense,' said the Queen, 'no such thing! Why, you could not drink a cup of tea to that!' Her second son, the Duke of Edinburgh, who died in 1900, showed more than a passing interest in music. He played the violin, composed a bit and was much involved with the Royal Academy and Royal College of Music.

And that was very much that, though we know that Prince Charles played the cello as a young man and likes his classical music. Perhaps the new royal baby will inherit some of his grandfather's musical genes... **6**



William Walton composed the score for the 1955 film *Richard III*, which starred Laurence Olivier (centre) as the troubled monarch

PHOTOGRAPHY: AF ARCHIVE/ALAMY



10 Smetana: Richard III
BBC Philharmonic /
Gianandrea Noseda
Chandos ⑤ CHAN10413 (11/07)

Encouraged and, indeed, inspired by Liszt whom he visited in Weimar in 1857, Smetana set about composing three symphonic poems heavily influenced by Liszt's. Far removed from the nationalist music that would make Smetana famous, they nevertheless show his growing mastery of symphonic writing. The first of the three, perhaps surprisingly for a Czech composer living in Gothenburg, is closely modelled on Shakespeare's *Richard III*.



7 German: Henry VIII
BBC Concert Orchestra /
John Wilson
Dutton Epoch ④ CDLX7285

Arthur Sullivan wrote the incidental music for an 1877 production by Charles Calvert of Shakespeare's *Henry VIII*, but a better suite by Edward German for a production by Sir Henry Irving achieved widespread popularity when it first appeared in 1892 (earlier, German too had composed a score for *Richard III*). Within a year, the sheet music for the Three Dances incorporated in the score had sold more than 30,000 copies.



4 Arne: Alfred
Solis; Philharmonia Chorale
and Baroque Orchestra /
Nicholas McGegan
Deutsche Harmonia Mundi
④ 75605 51314-2 (9/99)

No fewer than three composers have been attracted to the story of Alfred the Great. Both Flotow and Dvořák wrote operas to the same libretto by Karl Theodor Körner. But the most famous is that by Thomas Arne, first presented as a masque in 1740 at Cliveden, the country home of Frederick, Prince of Wales, and developed into an opera in 1753. The finale is, course, the rousing 'Rule, Britannia!'



9 Walton (arr Mathieson): Prelude to Richard III
Philharmonia Orchestra /
William Walton
EMI Classics ④ 565003-2 (11/94)

Richard III (1955) is the last of the three scores Walton composed for Olivier's Shakespeare films. The Prelude features a rousing quasi-Elgarian coronation march for the crowning of Edward IV, closely related to the two he had written for the coronations of George VI and our present Queen. Walton's score requests that it be played *Con prosciutto, agnello a confettura di fragole* ('With ham, lamb and strawberry jam').



6 Donizetti: Maria Stuarda
Solis; Bavarian Radio Chorus;
Munich Radio Orchestra /
Giuseppe Patanè
Philips ④ 426 233-2PH2 (4/90)

As the senior descendant of Henry VIII's elder sister, Mary Stuart (later Mary, Queen of Scots), rather than Elizabeth I, was seen by many as the rightful heir to Mary I. Her turbulent life was the subject of Donizetti's 1834 opera *Maria Stuarda*, based on a translation of Schiller's play of the same name. The Italian's previous forays into English royalty included *Anna Bolena* and *Rosmonda d'Inghilterra*, the mistress of Henry II.



3 Britten: Gloriana
Solis; Welsh National Opera /
Charles Mackerras
Decca ④ 478 5269DMA2
(7/93)

Based on Lytton Strachey's *Elizabeth and Essex: A Tragic History* with a libretto by William Plomer, Britten's *Gloriana* was premiered in 1953 during the coronation celebrations of Elizabeth II. At the time it was not a success with critics or audiences, many of whom had been hoping for a more upbeat *pièce d'occasion* and a monarch whose character more closely paralleled the new Elizabeth. Subsequent revivals of the revised score have attracted more positive reactions.



8 Coates: The Three Elizabeths
National Symphony
Orchestra / Eric Coates
Nimbus ⑤ ⑦ NI6231 (10/13)

The idea of writing a suite depicting the three regal Elizabeths (Elizabeth I, Queen Elizabeth the wife of George VI, and Princess Elizabeth) came in a letter to Coates from the Rev Arthur L Hall, Vicar of Barnes. None of the three movements is a musical pastiche of the period but each captures something of the character of each monarch, the central one, for instance, reflecting the future Queen Mother's Scottish roots.



5 Sullivan: Victoria and Merrie England
RTÉ Sinfonietta /
Andrew Penny
Marco Polo ④ 8 223677 (6/96)

Sullivan's ballet *Victoria and Merrie England* was written to celebrate Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee in 1897. Presented at the Alhambra Theatre, it ran for a creditable six months. Sullivan, who wrote most of the score on the French Riviera between gambling sprees, does not attempt a portrait of the monarch; instead he opts for a series of tableaux representing various events in the nation's history, culminating in Victoria's 1837 coronation.



2 Elgar: Queen Mary's Song
Catherine Wyn-Rogers mezz
Malcolm Martineau pf
Somm ⑤ SOMMCD220 (12/99)

'Bloody Mary', the half-sister of Edward VI and daughter of Henry VIII, was the subject of an 1875 verse play by Tennyson, the last in a trilogy of historical dramas he wrote (all failures). It portrays the final defeat of Roman Catholicism in England. From it, Elgar made a setting in 1889 of the *Lute Song*, 'a poem of ageing feminine despair', which became one of his *Seven Lieder* when it was republished in 1907.



1 Walton (arr Mathieson): Henry V Suite

Philharmonia Orchestra / William Walton
EMI Classics ④ 565003-2 (11/94)

Walton's greatest film score was written for Olivier's 1944 film *Henry V*. 'The music,' said Olivier, 'actually makes the film.' Muir Mathieson conducted the original soundtrack, while the composer led the 1946 recording with extracts spoken by Olivier. Almost two decades later, Walton recorded the five-movement *Henry V*

Suite that he had sanctioned, arranged by Mathieson. Walton had already set two of these movements for string orchestra: 'Passacaglia - The Death of Falstaff' and 'Touch her soft lips and part', which show with what sensitivity he responded to Shakespeare's text.

THE GRAMOPHONE COLLECTION

Haydn's *Drumroll* Symphony No 103

Bridging Mozart's 39th and Beethoven's *Eroica*, Haydn's penultimate symphony works best on record when its interpreters engage with the work's inherent spirit of Classical disorder, writes **Peter Quantrill**

Nine symphonies in E flat give notice that Haydn regarded the key as a vehicle for serious matters, in particular Nos 22 (*The Philosopher*) and 55 (*The Schoolmaster*), which play with contrasts of solo and *tutti* disposition to create a new kind of instrumental theatre made famous by the finale of the *Farewell* Symphony. Nothing in them, however, prepares us for the impact of 'continual strokes of genius' heard by the *Morning Chronicle*'s reporter at the premiere of No 103 on March 2, 1795, and not only in the opening timpani roll that gives the symphony its nickname.

Rather for a precedent and stimulus we might look to Mozart and his last E flat symphony, No 39, with its long, timpani-accented *Adagio* introduction that journeys to the brink of C minor before settling for the major in the business of the main *Allegro*; not to mention a *Trio* led by the then-novel clarinet so favoured by the younger man and hitherto barely used by Haydn. Nor are these the only *Drumroll* elements with Mozartian precursors. The rising, dotted motif over a pedal C at the start of the slow movement's coda echoes the climax of the quartet in Act 2 of *Le nozze di Figaro*. Then there is the first movement's pervasive and sombre bass melody which bears a family resemblance to the medieval 'Dies irae' plainchant. Nikolaus Harnoncourt having made a case for Mozart's last three symphonies as an 'instrumental oratorio', I would argue that Haydn's No 103 may be an 'instrumental Requiem' written by the father of the symphony to honour the memory of his 'son' and friend in music.

Of 65 recordings auditioned for this survey, more of those made in the first and last 20 years of the symphony's history on record treat it on personal terms rather than in a generically Classical style, and they are accordingly represented in what follows.

THE OPENING DRUMROLL

What did Haydn want? We can't be certain. Arranging the symphony for piano trio (keyboard with ad-lib string accompaniment), Salomon marked a straightforward *crescendo-diminuendo* (hairpins) over the opening E flat pedal to be played by all three instruments. He then added a perplexing *fortissimo* to the hairpins in a later version for flute, string quartet and piano. Both solutions may belong to the character of their instrumentation and not to the scale of the symphony.

Many recordings follow at face value the pair of hairpins which appear in the first printed edition of the full score from 1938. According to taste and the performers' approach to the rest of the symphony, this represents either simple fidelity (Colin Davis), prosaic literalism (Charles Munch in 1950 on RCA), or a framing device around the symphonic argument which would be consonant with the structural novelties appreciable throughout the work.

However, in the first scholarly edition of modern times, HC Robbins Landon takes note of the single word Haydn did leave us to describe the moment: *Intrada* – an archaic term even in the composer's own time, referring to a type of piece employed 'to inaugurate some festive event' (*New Grove Dictionary*, 2nd edn). He proposes



a *Creation*-like *fortissimo-diminuendo*, first interpreted on record by Mogens Wöldike and used by Roger Norrington as an integral element of the challenge and narrative of the symphony as a whole. Thus the bassoon solo emerges from the drumroll in appropriately Stygian gloom.

Harnoncourt, Claudio Abbado and Marc Minkowski are among more recent and radical Haydn interpreters to develop the idea of a cadenza, whether brief and annunciatory (Richard Hickox) or commanding and aggressive (Ivor Bolton). A precedent for this can be found in the skittering keyboard solo towards the climax of the generally loopy finale to No 98 – a point well made by Thomas Fey in prefacing the *Drumroll* with this very work.



The King's Theatre, London, in c1790: Haydn's Drumroll Symphony was premiered here on March 2, 1795, where it received an enthusiastic reception

However performed, the drumroll withholds a pulse and breeds tonal insecurity. Suspense is essential. No excuses, then, for a dull *mezzo-forte* (Neville Marriner) or apologetic *piano* (Ernest Bour); out-of-tune timpani (Frans Brüggen); or the cellos and basses barging in with a broad-shouldered dirge (Igor Markevitch and others).

The foregoing takes little account of what happens when the Intrada returns, just before the coda. Not much, is the answer for most performances. Robbins Landon's emendation neatly fits the preceding perfect cadence. Repeating an elaborate cadenza is no better than reheating the leftovers from last night's dinner party. I think Michael Gielen is as inventive and

discreet as Haydn himself: a terrace of drumrolls increasing with crisp, minatory force and an abbreviated version for the repeat – closer on the scale of Haydn-writes-war to the anguished cries of the Nelson Mass (its coupling on disc) than the toy-soldier kitsch of the *Military* Symphony.

While taking the opening gesture seriously, it's worth bearing in mind an anecdote reported by Haydn in one of his London journals: 'Just as the director of a grand concert was about to begin the first number, the kettledrummer called loudly to him and said he should wait a moment, since his two kettledrums were not yet tuned. The leader could and would not wait any longer, and said he should transpose in the meantime.'

PIONEERS

The symphony's history on record gets off to a crackling start with two recordings from the 78rpm era. In the first of them, Vladimir Golschmann (1935; yet to be transferred to CD) puts the St Louis Symphony Orchestra through its paces with the swiftest opening movement on record. The strings are lean and light on their feet, while the winds' unvarying *sostenuto* doesn't marry with Golschmann's avant-garde drive, open textures and determination that the symphony's radical nature should come over loud and clear. Haydn marked the second movement *Andante più tosto allegretto*, the *più tosto allegretto* a qualifying afterthought added by him when he revised the symphony,

having left London for the last time and returned to Vienna. Golschmann reverts to a solid *adagio* with heavy broadenings at the end of each variation, though again the strings' shapely phrasing, with swells on long notes and lots of unwritten slurs, makes better sense of the tempo than later interpretations.

Still more deserving of modern attention is **Leslie Heward's** 1941 recording with the Hallé Orchestra, yet to be transferred to CD – were it available, it would undoubtedly have been one of my final top choices. From the simple, sinister restraint of the drumroll, this is Haydn fully loaded. Set aside a bad old edition (shared by Golschmann) of the trio without clarinets, and the odd enforced *rallentando* to mark the end of a side, and Heward is alive to all the competing dramatic voices in the outer movements. He lends space to the second subjects and crafts a haunting narrative from the slow movement's alternating variations on two Croatian folksongs.

COMPLETISTS

There's less at stake in the recording from the often-overlooked, first complete cycle of Haydn symphonies on record by the Vienna Chamber Orchestra and **Ernst Märzendorfer** (only available as a download from haydnhouse.com). The band is a good size, but tuning and ensemble are unreliable, and there's a frustrating slackness to the rhythms. Still, rather Märzendorfer's *Gemütlichkeit* than **Antal Dorati's** undifferentiated bustle – all gabble from the strings and bland mellifluousness from the winds, with phrase ends often swallowed by the acoustic, and the *Minuet* lurching forward with huge accents on the first beat of the bar.

Another victim of a complete-cycle mentality, the inevitable haste in recording and a boomy acoustic is **Adám Fischer's** recording with the Austro-Hungarian Haydn Orchestra. It's possible to make out some nifty phrasing in the finale, but when trumpet and drums enter, all bets are off.

PERIOD-INSTRUMENT CHOICE

Les Musiciens du Louvre-Grenoble /

Marc Minkowski Naïve Ⓟ ④ V5176

This is live, unlike most performances considered here, and it shows. Both the



minuet and finale are high on adrenalin, but there's also a slow movement that finds tender release in the 'Mozart moment' of the resolution.



Haydn: wilfully violates a Classical style

Thomas Fey is his own man (and pupil of Harnoncourt) in every detail, not least an unwritten timpani roll that heralds the last phrase of the *Minuet*. Directing the first theme of the *Andante* without vibrato, spaciouly but with dovetailed strings that question and answer, he finds the character of a happy funeral march that one can imagine only Haydn composing. A rustic bump lifts the major-key theme, but moderated by concert-hall manners (not that Haydn observed them in England – he noted wryly that Londoners seemed too busy drinking to actually listen to his music). Perhaps some will find the drama of articulation in the finale too stagey for its own good, but Fey shines light on the originality of the work like few others.

GOLDEN AGE

A recent reissue of the Schneider Quartet's work (Replay, 1/15) gave a reminder of what a golden age the 1950s and early '60s were for Haydn performance, spurred by the scholarship of Robbins Landon and his first wife, Christa, and the commercial convenience of the new LP, but also by the curiosity of musicians outside the Viennese tradition.

The carefully weighted introduction from **Mogens Wöldike** (10/58, 9/60) and

BIG-BAND CHOICE

SWR SO Baden-Baden & Freiburg /

Michael Gielen Glor Classics Ⓟ GC08041

Lower on wit than some but high on cultured wind-playing from the new-music specialists



of the Baden-Baden and Freiburg Radio Symphony Orchestra. Gielen opts for the unconventional modulation of the original finale.

the Vienna State Opera Orchestra is bursting with barely restrained drama, the *Allegro* full of flash and fire. This is classic Haydn conducting, taking care of the small things. In the *Andante's* second variation the solo violinist (Willi Boskovsky, rather more stylish than his trumpet-playing colleagues) labours his solo a little but still conveys the idea of a chamber-scale flight of fancy. Only the finale is somewhat timid and convention-bound.

You'd never level that charge at **Hermann Scherchen**, whose recording with the same orchestra is characteristically insightful and infuriating by turns. The *Adagio* introduction drags at crotchet = 35 (less than half the speed of Golschmann), the *Allegro* likewise at double that tempo – it's a mercy Scherchen doesn't take the exposition repeat. The *Minuet*, however, while less well played and recorded than in the Wöldike, has an ideal snap, weight of accent and contrast between voices.

On its LP reissue in 1960, Wöldike's Haydn was judged by Jeremy Noble as 'consistently less musical' than **Thomas Beecham's**, and the same critic had commented on the latter's original 1958 release that it lacked 'careful and sensitive shaping of the melodic lines'. It's true that Beecham's bassoonist shapes his introductory four-bar solo with four equal phrases even at a sententious tempo, which is further lent the character of an *opera buffa* recitative with a nicely judged pause at bar 20, before a wonderfully suave response from the strings of the RPO. However, both *Minuet* and finale are hammered into submission by jerky accents on the first beat of the bar.

Both **Harry Blech** and **Leslie Jones** (the latter 3/69) make an exact point of how counter-intuitively Haydn articulates that bassoon solo. With them you can also hear the difference between the basses accompanying in unison first time round and then at the octave before the coda. They each have around them a small and dedicated team of London-based musicians led in a spirit of sometimes

QUIRKY CHOICE

Heidelberg Symphony Orchestra /

Thomas Fey Hänssler Ⓟ CD98 031

The joy of Fey's symphony cycle is its uncyclical nature: he comes at every



symphony on its own terms. Articulation and timbre can change from bar to bar – smooth to rough, dry to liquid – but always in pursuit of Haydn's imagination.

pedantic, often inspired literalism. Blech drives the first movement rather hard, while Jones (with the Little Orchestra of London) never relents from a strict *allegretto* for the slow movement's variations. He is also the first (and still one of the few) to include a keyboard continuo; my own feeling is that it's either superfluous or fussily decorative.

GRAND OLD MEN

The *Drumroll* Symphony inspired affection and admiration from great conductors in the middle of the last century, but did not divert them from throwing a *legato* blanket over Haydn's nimble rhetoric. **Georg Solti's** first recording (1949) is smooth, quick and banal, and the second (1981) even more so. **Eugen Jochum's** first recording, with the Hamburg State Opera Orchestra, is clearer and takes more stylistic risks than his heavier, slower DG remakes (1958, 1971). In an otherwise Kapellmeister-ish account of good taste and clipped phrasing, **Günter Wand** brings out the false start of the horns at the opening of the finale, but he doesn't time the joke, with no pause for the 'proper' quicker tempo to establish itself. **Hans Swarowsky** introduces soupy *portamento* as well as sliding *legato* and makes a mad dash for the line in the first movement.

Provided you can forget anything you think you know about 'style' in Haydn, **Sergiu Celibidache** always has the capacity to surprise (and **Jeffrey Tate** is similarly elegant but lifeless in the *Adagio* introduction), but if you're determined to hear the *Drumroll* as an upbeat to the first four symphonies of Beethoven, the sound logic of **Leonard Bernstein** and **Herbert von Karajan** will please those who agree with Charles Rosen that Haydn and Mozart 'wrote their symphonic works with large, heavy-sounding ensembles in mind'.

'AUTHENTIC' APPROACHES

Rosen went on to complain that modern performances 'suffer from an insufficient reinforcement of the bass line' – whereas I find that the transparency of most period-instrument performances allows for a much more dynamic bass presence, and for Beethoven's debt to Haydn to register more tellingly in detailed rhetoric than in sheer scale. This is illustrated by the Consort of London under **Robert Haydon Clark**, who conducts one of the slowest *Andantes* on record (only **Neville Marriner** and Karajan take longer), but with a gentle nudge to the upbeats and doleful bass he makes many *allegretto*-style performances of the movement sound quite trivial; and in the fragmentary wind exchanges of the coda,




Marc Minkowski: nothing he does with his Musiciens du Louvre-Grenoble is played by the book

the *Eroica's* Funeral March (also a C minor movement within an E flat symphony) is less than a decade away. He brings an ideal weight and spring to the *Minuet* and a perfect balance to the trio – like Jones, he

doesn't try to 'sell' the music. He is also among few performers to restore from Haydn's London original a 13-bar excursion into the tonally alien region of C flat major just before the finishing post.

SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

DATE / ARTISTS	RECORD COMPANY (REVIEW DATE)
1935 St Louis SO / Golschmann	Columbia 68323/26-D (nla)
1941 Hallé Orch / Heward	Columbia DX1057/9 (1/42-nla)
1942 Hamburg St Op Orch / Jochum	Lys LYS193; BnF 5
1949 LPO / Solti	Fab Four (ex-Decca) 4 233022 (12/50*)
1950 Boston SO / Munch	RCA 88697 04812-2 (9/53*)
1951 Vienna St Op Orch / Scherchen	DG 471 256-2GOM6 (7/04)
1955 London Mozart Players / Blech	First Hand 3 FHR05 (5/56) (2/10)
1956 Vienna St Op Orch / Wöldike	haydnhouse.com (ex-Vanguard) 8 10/58)
1956 Vienna St Op Orch / Swarowsky	Tuxedo Music M TUXCD1091
1957 SWR SO Baden-Baden & Freiburg / Bour	SWR Music M SWR10019
1958 RPO / Beecham	EMI 367893-2; Warner Classics 8 984603-2 (2/54*)
1958 Bavarian RSO / Jochum	BnF (ex-DG) 5/59*)
1959 Cologne Gürzenich Orch / Wand	Testament F SBT1356 (1/05)
1960s Vienna CO / Märzendorfer	haydnhouse.com 8
1963 VPO / Karajan	Decca 448 042-2DC9 (10/63*)
1959 Lamoureux Orch / Markevitch	Philips 8 SFM23011 (nla)
1968 Little Orch of London / Jones	Nonesuch 2 HHLJ201001 (3/69*); haydnhouse.com 8
1970 New York PO / Bernstein	Sony Classical 8 88697 48045-2
1971 Philh Hungarica / Dorati	Decca 4522562; Decca 33 discs) 478 1221DX33 (5/61*)
1971 LPO / Jochum	DG 474 364-2GC5 (11/73*; 7/75*)
1976 Concertgebouw Orch / C Davis	Philips M 442 611-2PM2 (7/92)
1976 ASMF / Marriner	Philips 454 335-2PB10 (10/77-nla)
1981 BPO / Karajan	DG 429 658-2GSE5 (11/82*)
1981 LPO / Solti	Decca 475 551-2DC4 (3/93*)
1985 ECO / Tate	EMI 509015-2 (5/87); 8 372472-2
1987 Austro-Hungarian Haydn Orch / A Fischer	Nimbus 2 N1520Q/4 (12/89); 8 N11722 (4/09)
1987 Concertgebouw Orch / Harmoncourt	Warner Classics 5 2564 69612-2
1987 Orch of 18th Century / Brüggen	Philips 4730152
1993 Munich PO / Celibidache	EMI 085566-2 (2/98)
1995 COE / Abbado	DG 477 8117GB4 (12/96*)
1992 Consort of London / Clark	Collins Classics M CC1377 (8/93*)
1999 Collegium Musicum 90 / Hickox	Chandos F CHAN0655 (10/00)
2001 Orch of St Luke's / Mackerras	Telarc M CD80282
2004 SWR SO Baden-Baden & Freiburg / Gielen	Glor Classics F GC08041
2009 Les Musiciens du Louvre-Grenoble / Minkowski	Naive 4 V5176 (9/10)
2009 SWR SO Stuttgart / Norrington	Hänssler Classic 4 CD93 252
2011 Salzburg Mozarteum Orch / Bolton	Oehms F OC421
2013 Heidelberg SO / Fey	Hänssler Classic F CD98 031 (11/14)

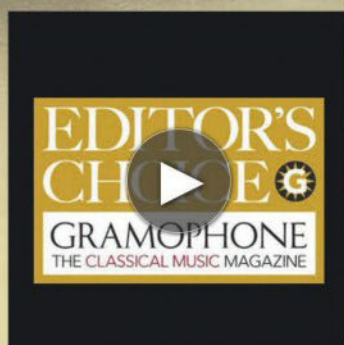


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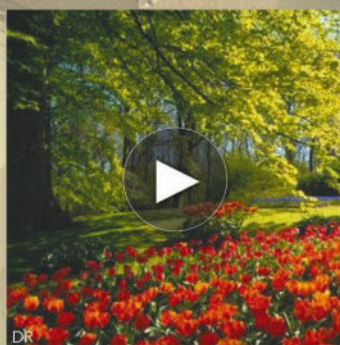


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Under Abbado, the COE players 'imbue every phrase of the Minuet with tiny shifts of weight and colour'

Frans Brüggen also takes the time to bring vernacular charm to the slow movement's themes, underpinned by a soft drone bass. The drawback here is the *Minuet*, so clipped and emphatic that notes simply drown in the backwash of *sforzando* accents. Another extreme approach to this movement is taken by **Marc Minkowski**, but after imparting a breathtaking swing to the first theme he relaxes for the second, and, as with Fey, nothing he does is played by the book: affection and delight shines from every bar. The *Eroica*-like false entry of the horns at the start of the finale is done with splendid bravado – sometimes admiring laughter is the only response to the labyrinthine twists of Haydn's harmony in this movement with its explosive variety of orchestration. Clark privileges the high horn writing, whereas Minkowski gives the timpanist his head throughout the symphony – appropriately so, you might think. Both are greatly preferable to the acid strings of Collegium Musicum 90 and the how-do-you-do conventions of **Richard Hickox**'s conducting.

MORE GRAND OLD MEN

Recordings made in the past two decades or so sharpen the contrast between 'abstract' argument and instrumental theatre: the symphony as quartet or opera. The elegance of the Concertgebouw's playing for **Colin Davis** belongs to the last breath of an age in which we thought Haydn was hiding the light of his fantastic invention beneath a bushel of urbane gentility. In retrospect, it seems that the performers were doing the hiding.


Playing around with pauses and articulation marks, **Nikolaus Harnoncourt** finds surprises around every corner, and invents some new corners for himself.

Just as he's fond of finding human analogies in rehearsal and conversation, it's impossible to listen to the groping progress of the introduction, the *sotto voce* tread of the slow movement's opening or the vanishing wisps of the finale and not see characters as well as hear them. The Concertgebouw could hardly sound more different here than they do for Davis, whereas the Southwest German radio orchestras play with a surprising consistency of colour and timbre under, respectively, **Michael Gielen** and **Roger Norrington**. Although Norrington's ideas are more radically pursued here than they are with the London Classical Players in 1992 – smoother *legato*, longer pauses, a jogtrot *Andante* and stately *Minuet*, before the finale flies off like a rocket – I find Gielen more probing. His calculation of tempos entails that the first movement's *Allegro* succeeds the *Adagio* as a consequence of – not a contrast to – it. Both he and **Claudio Abbado** lend pathos to the first two movements, though Abbado's band is smaller, tighter and more attentive to both dynamic and articulation marks, so that the long and rich development section of the main *Allegro* gains awesome momentum through its unprecedented transformation of the introduction's 'Dies irae' motif. The Chamber Orchestra of Europe players imbue every phrase of the *Minuet* with tiny shifts of weight and colour, and the gently burbling trio is decorated with trills as apt here as in the 'Scene by the Brook' in the *Pastoral* Symphony. **Charles Mackerras** pursues similar ideas, but to extremes of speed and force that remind me of the composer summoning musicians from Vienna to show Londoners how minuets should be done. 'He considered they were spoilt by being hurried,' observed a friendly acquaintance, 'nor could he dispossess

[Londoners] of the idea that quickness was the essential character of the moderns.'

CONCLUSION

To propose that the *Drumroll* Symphony forms a musical and emotional bridge between Mozart's 39th and Beethoven's *Eroica* is not to burden it with a 'tragic' or anachronistic narrative but rather to join contemporary critics of Haydn in their admiration of his 'capacity to synthesise lighter and more serious elements within a single work'. Noting this, the scholar Mark Evan Bonds has explored rhetorical correspondences between Haydn and Laurence Sterne, encapsulated by Jean Paul Richter: 'One can sense something similar to the audacity of [Sterne's] annihilating humour – and at the same time an expression of disdain for the world – in certain music – eg Haydn's, which annihilates entire key areas through one that is foreign, and which storms along between *pianissimo* and *fortissimo*, *presto* and *andante*.'

What Bonds terms the 'wilful violation of generic convention' to be savoured in *Tristram Shandy* has parallels throughout the *Drumroll*, notably in the formal innovations of the first movement and the vernacular origins of both slow movement and finale, but few interpreters engage with that Sterne-like spirit of Classical disorder. Listening to Heward, Jones, Clark, Gielen, Minkowski, Abbado and Fey, however, one appreciates something of what makes it a 'Composers' Symphony', studied to productive effect by Beethoven, Martinů (in his Third), Tchaikovsky (the Fourth) and others. At the height of the first movement's coda (bar 221) in jubilant E flat, both clarinets enter on a submediant C that for Davis and other maestros is an unwelcome intrusion to be discreetly ignored. For Minkowski and Abbado, it's the lady in red making a late entrance with a flourish as tantalising as the sort of gossip Haydn recorded on his visits to London: 'Duchess of Devonshire...Anecdote about the foot under her petticoat...' 

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only with *The Creation* did Haydn feel he had learnt to orchestrate, with winds in particular. Here is the palette that would serve Weber for *Der Freischütz*.

PLAYLISTS

Explore music via our themed listening suggestions

Harpsichordist and founder of La Risonanza Fabio Bonizzoni explores the themes of love and death in music, while *Gramophone* critics Alexandra Coghlan and Pwyll ap Siôn take inspiration from *Alice in Wonderland* and English experimentalism.

All about Alice

Alexandra Coghlan chooses 10 tracks inspired by Lewis Carroll's fantastical *Alice in Wonderland* stories

It's been 150 years since Alice first tumbled down Lewis Carroll's rabbit hole, landing in a world of talking cats and smoking caterpillars, and still this curious (and curiousest) tale continues to work its magic on readers. The story has spawned films, television programmes, plays and comic books, as well as more than its fair share of ballets, operas and orchestral works.

No musician is more synonymous with *Alice in Wonderland* than David del Tredici, the American Pulitzer Prize-winning composer whose fascination with Lewis Carroll's book has spanned over 20 years and six major compositions. *Final Alice* is among the loveliest works by this unapologetic neo-Romantic, an 'opera, written in concert form' that concludes with the expansive soprano aria 'A boat 'neath a sunny sky', sung here by Barbara Hendricks. Del Tredici is joined in this playlist by fellow American Deems Taylor, whose *Through the Looking Glass* shares the same richly melodic sound world.

Experimental composers have also been drawn to Carroll's paradoxical world, including Ligeti, whose *Nonsense Madrigals* includes a whimsical setting of 'The Lobster Quadrille' – and Harry Partch, whose *Two Settings from Lewis Carroll* includes the evocative 'O Frabjous Day!', using the bass marimba to capture both the menace and exotic appeal of the Jabberwocky.

- **Talbot Suite from Alice's Adventures in Wonderland – Alice Alone**
Royal Philharmonic Orchestra / Christopher Austin
Signum
- **Talbot Suite from Alice's Adventures in Wonderland – The Flower Garden Part 1**
Royal Philharmonic Orchestra / Christopher Austin
Signum



Still working its magic: the curious world depicted in *Alice in Wonderland* has inspired countless composers

- **Fraser-Simson How Doth The Little Crocodile**
Elizabeth Atherton sop Iain Burnside pf
Just Accord
- **Tchaikovsky (arr Davis) Alice in Wonderland – The Garden of the Living Flowers**
City of Prague SO / Carl Davis
Carl Davis Collection
- **Del Tredici Final Alice – A boat 'neath a sunny sky**
Barbara Hendricks sop Chicago SO / Georg Solti
Decca Eloquence
- **Fain Alice in Wonderland – All in the golden afternoon**
Diana Damrau sop RLPO / David Charles Abell
Erato
- **Fain Alice in Wonderland**
Oscar Peterson Trio
MPS Records
- **Ligeti Nonsense Madrigal No 5 – The Lobster Quadrille**
The King's Singers
Sony Classical
- **Partch Two Settings from Lewis Carroll – O Frabjous day!** Harry Partch, etc
Innova
- **Deems Taylor Through The Looking Glass – The Jabberwocky**
Seattle Symphony / Gerard Schwarz
Naxos

Love and death

Fabio Bonizzoni chooses 10 works that plumb the depths of the human experience at its most emotional

Love and death are surely the two main sources of inspiration for music of the Baroque period – possibly for all music, maybe for all arts. The reason for this is that these are the two strongest things that we – human beings – experience in life. When a composer or performer is 'creating' one of these entities with the sound of his voice or instrument, it is in their own soul, in their own experience, that they are looking. When a listener is touched by the music it is because they are able to let their own soul resonate with the souls of the composer and performer, eventually experiencing the same feelings.

Take the wonderful Roberta Invernizzi, who makes us feel her distress and anxiety with her intuitive voice in the aria 'Ombre vane' from Vivaldi's *Griselda* – a piece which we'll perform as part of La Risonanza's Wigmore Hall concert on July 21. Or the funeral music of Purcell, Mozart's *Trauermusik* and especially Bach; performing or listening to music about death and mortality is a unique experience of healing. It is hard to grasp why this happens. It's maybe the vanishing and

immaterial quality of the music – now heard, now disappeared – or the fact that music is the form of art that penetrates deepest in our body. If we open ourselves up to it, then music can be as therapeutic for us listeners as for the performers.

- **Purcell Music for the Funeral of Queen Mary**
English Baroque Soloists; Monteverdi Choir and Orchestra / John Eliot Gardiner
Warner Classics
- **Hasse Requiem**
Il Fondamento / Paul Dombrecht
Naïve
- **Handel Ero e Leandro - Empio mare**
Raffaella Milanese sop La Risonanza / Fabio Bonizzoni
Glossa
- **Handel The Ways of Zion do Mourn**
Monteverdi Choir and Orchestra / John Eliot Gardiner
Warner Classics
- **Mozart Maurerische Trauermusik**
Orchestra of the 18th Century / Frans Brüggen
Glossa
- **Bach St John Passion** Sols; Collegium Vocale Gent / Philippe Herreweghe
Harmonia Mundi
- **Bach Psalm 51 (after Pergolesi's Stabat Mater)**
Balthasar Neumann Ensemble / Thomas Hengelbrock DHM
- **Bach Ich hatte viel Bekümmernis**
Amsterdam Baroque Orchestra and Choir /

Ton Koopman
Challenge Classics

- **Vivaldi Griselda - Ombre vane**
Roberta Invernizzi sop La Risonanza / Fabio Bonizzoni
Glossa
- **CPE Bach Cello Concerto in A major, Wq179/H439**
Anner Bylsma, Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment / Gustav Leonhardt Erato

English experimentalists

Pwyll ap Siôn offers a guide to English composers who revel in the subversive

John Cage is often regarded as the father of experimental music, but its manifestation in England was only partly inspired by him: Britain has always had its own tradition of non-conformism and anti-establishmentarianism. Surprising, therefore, that the aristocratic Lord Berners (1883-1950) should be seen as one of its most important precursors. Berners's later work draws on vernacular styles (also a feature of the later school of English experimentalists), but his early compositions are unpredictable and uncompromising. Fast-forward half a century and we reach the so-called 'golden age' of English experimental music. The Scratch Orchestra, founded in 1969 by Cornelius Cardew, Michael Parsons and Howard Skempton, provided the foundations during the 1970s, and Cardew's magnum opus, *The Great Learning*, remains one of its most telling achievements.

Soon after, a number of English experimentalists started embracing consonance and tonality. Skempton's *Well, well Cornelius* – composed in 1982 in memory of Cardew – remains true to this spirit. Michael Nyman's experimental *1-100* (1976), for multiple pianos, starts off with a C major chord that gradually unravels in a descending harmonic spiral of increasing dissonance. John White's one-movement piano sonatas also often defy categorisation.

Of the group of English experimentalists, which also included Christopher Hobbs and Hugh Shrapnel, the most well known is Gavin Bryars, whose *Jesus Blood Never Failed Me Yet* (1971) acquired cult status when Tom Waits decided to sing along with the looped recording of the homeless man for a recording released in 1993. Like Cardew, Bryars formed his own experimental orchestra, The Portsmouth Sinfonia, in 1970, whose built-in inability to perform classical music resulted in low-tech performances of 'high art', often with hilarious results. Brian Eno was a member, and decided to feature the orchestra on the track 'Put a Straw Under Baby', for his 1974



Michael Nyman: experimental in his piece 1-100

album *Taking Tiger Mountain (By Strategy)*. Eno's Obscure Label also released the first Penguin Cafe Orchestra album, founded by Simon Jeffes and Helen Liebmann, who applied the experimental principles of 'randomness, spontaneity and surprise' to a folk/pop idiom.

- **Berners 3 petites marches funèbres - No 3**
Menahem Pressler pf Naxos
- **Cardew The Great Learning - Paragraph 7**
The Scratch Orchestra / Cornelius Cardew
DG
- **Skempton Well, well Cornelius**
John Tilbury pf
Sony Classical
- **Nyman 1-100** Michael Nyman pf
Virgin Records
- **White Piano Sonata No 57**
Roger Smalley pf
NMC
- **Bryars Jesus Blood Never Failed Me Yet - section five** Tom Waits voice
Hampton Quartet; orchestra / Michael Riesman Decca
- **Eno Put a Straw Under Baby**
The Scratch Orchestra / Brian Eno
Virgin Records
- **Penguin Cafe Orchestra Telephone and Rubber Band**
Penguin Cafe Orchestra
Virgin Records
- **Crane Chorale for Howard Skempton**
Thalia Myers pf NMC
- **Harrison Flowers Fall**
Clive Williamson pf
Cadenza Music



Fabio Bonizzoni believes in music's healing power

qobuz The playlists for this feature were compiled in conjunction with Qobuz, the music streaming service. You can listen to the playlists at gramophone.co.uk/playlists

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Gothenburg Concert Hall, Sweden & online

The GSO's Nielsen commemorations continue, May 21, 30 & June 13

Herbert Blomstedt returns to the Gothenburg SO – with whom he's had a relationship since 1950 – on May 21 to conduct Nielsen's Third Symphony (with soloists Hanna Husáhr and Carl Ackerfeldt) and Beethoven's Seventh (available to watch live at GSOPlay and thereafter between June 1 and July 1). On May 30, François-Xavier Roth conducts the Sixth Symphony alongside Dutilleul's *Métaboles* and Shostakovich's Second Cello Concerto (with Truls Mørk); the concert will be available on GSOPlay between June 9 and July 9. The other anniversary composer Jean Sibelius (also born in 1865) joins Nielsen on June 13 when Kent Nagano conducts the Finn's Symphonies Nos 1 and 3 and the Dane's Clarinet Concerto (with Martin Fröst). You can watch the concert live at GSOPlay and thereafter between June 23 and July 24. gso.se; gsoplay.com

Wigmore Hall & BBC Radio 3

Lunchtime concerts, May 25; June 1, 8 & 15

On Monday May 25, multiple *Gramophone* Award-winner Jean-Efflam Bavouzet plays Beethoven, Boulez, Ohana and Debussy. The following Monday, June 1, violinist Tasmin Little and pianist Martin Roscoe join forces to perform Brahms, Dvořák and Franck (the Violin Sonata). On June 8, the Škampa Quartet perform Suk, Pavel Fischer (his *Mad Piper* String Quartet No 3) and Dvořák (String Quintet in E flat with Krzysztof Chorzelski, the guest viola player). The Gould Piano Trio, meanwhile, perform a rarity, York Bowen's *Rhapsody Trio*, on June 15; Schubert's B flat Piano Trio is also on the programme. All concerts take place at 1pm and are broadcast live on BBC Radio 3. wigmore-hall.org.uk; bbc.co.uk/radio3

Orchestra Hall, Detroit & online

Leonard Slatkin conducts Puccini, May 29 & 31

The Detroit Symphony Orchestra ends its 2014-15 season with two concert performances of Puccini's *Tosca* conducted by Music Director Leonard Slatkin. Patricia Racette takes the title-role, with James Valenti appearing as Cavaradossi and Eric Owens as Scarpia. There are two performances: the first, on Friday May 29, is being webcast live at 8pm EDT (1am BST, 2am CET); the second is a Sunday afternoon matinee (3pm). dso.org; dso.org/live

EVENT OF THE MONTH

Pianist Pierre-Laurent Aimard once more oversees the Aldeburgh Festival as its Artistic Director



Various venues, Aldeburgh & BBC Radio 3

Aldeburgh Festival, June 12-28

The Aldeburgh Festival boasts a series of inspiring concerts, once again under the Artistic Directorship of Pierre-Laurent Aimard. aldeburgh.co.uk; bbc.co.uk/radio3

Snape Maltings Concert Hall, Aldeburgh & BBC Radio 3

BBC Music Day, June 5

As part of the BBC's inaugural Music Day, a variety of young performers perform a lunchtime concert at Snape. Featuring two New Generation Artists, baritone Benjamin Appl and pianist Pavel Kolesnikov, alongside Aldeburgh Young Musicians, members of the Britten-Pears Young Artist Programme and the choir of St James Middle School, the concert is presented by Clemency Burton-Hill and broadcast live on Radio 3. aldeburgh.co.uk; bbc.co.uk/radio3

Royal Opera House & cinemas worldwide

Puccini's *La bohème*, June 10

The Royal Opera House presents one of opera's great tragic romances, *La bohème*, starring Anna Netrebko as the consumptive Mimi and Joseph Calleja as the ardent Rodolfo, in a production directed by John Copley and conducted by Dan Ettinger. With live screenings available at more than 1500 cinemas across 35-plus countries, thousands of opera lovers can enjoy this Puccini classic. roh.org.uk; roh.org.uk/cinemas

Berlin Philharmonie & Digital Concert Hall

Gustavo Dudamel conducts Mahler 1, June 12

Mahler's First Symphony is particularly significant for Gustavo Dudamel: it was

The Mahler CO perform two concerts (June 14 & 16); the former includes works by Mozart, Ravel, Benjamin and Bedford, under François-Xavier Roth, while the latter places the orchestra's soloists in the spotlight in Ravel's *Introduction and Allegro* and Schubert's Octet.

New music is highlighted in a concert on June 25 from the London Sinfonietta under George Benjamin, featuring repertoire by Birtwistle, Knussen and Ligeti, while, at the other end of the spectrum, a programme performed on June 23 by Ensemble Organum celebrates Byzantine song, Renaissance plainchant and Corsican polyphony.

And don't miss the BBC SO and Sakari Oramo on June 24 performing Mahler's *Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen*, with soloist Alice Coote, and Britten's *Four Sea Interludes and Passacaglia*, with Tal Rosner's visuals. All these concerts, and others, will be broadcast on Radio 3, either live or at a future date. aldeburgh.co.uk; bbc.co.uk/radio3

with this work that he won the Gustav Mahler Conducting Competition in 2004 and so launched his international career; he also chose the symphony for his inaugural concert as Music Director of the LA Philharmonic. In this concert, which will be live-streamed via the Berlin Philharmonic's Digital Concert Hall, the work is paired with Mozart's *Posthorn Serenade*, a work that the Berlin Philharmonic recorded for DG with Karl Böhm. 'You would expect Böhm and the Berlin Philharmonic to produce superlative Mozart playing,' wrote Trevor Harvey in his review (7/71) 'and I don't think you will be disappointed.' digitalconcerthall.com

Glyndebourne & UK cinemas

Ticciati conducts Ravel's double-bill, June 21

A performance from 2012 of Glyndebourne's acclaimed Laurent Pelly-directed production of Ravel's *L'enfant et les sortilèges* and *L'heure espagnole* (the DVD won *Gramophone's* Opera Award in 2014) is being screened in cinemas throughout the UK. The production is conducted by Glyndebourne's Music Director Robin Ticciati, with Glyndebourne favourite Danielle de Niese starring as both Concepción in *L'heure* and the Child in *L'enfant*, who is joined by a predominantly Francophone cast. See Glyndebourne's website for a full listing of participating cinemas and ticket details. glyndebourne.com

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This month an AV amplifier designed for music, a CD player built for streaming and the struggles of manufacturers to keep up with all this technology.

Andrew Everard, Audio Editor

JUNE TEST DISCS



With a live presence and vitality typical of LSO Live, this recording of *Harold en Italie* finds the orchestra at its best and provides a thrilling test for a system.



Another disc with a fine live feel, this Sibelius coupling with the BBC NOW under Thomas Søndergård will bring out the best in any well-matched set-up.

Rethinking the way a system sounds

Linn's SPACE Optimisation leads the latest audio launches this month



Last month it was Naim rolling out its latest technology; this month its traditional rival, Linn, has been creating a stir with a range of new products and a major rethink of how audio systems operate.

On the surface, Linn has revamped its network player range with new versions of the Exakt DS, Akurate DS and Majik DS/DSM models **1**, complete with redesigned digital architecture to reduce jitter, and shorter, simpler signal paths for overall gains in performance. All the new models also have Exakt Link outputs to allow them to be upgraded for use in one of the company's Exakt Aktiv systems.

However, what's more striking is that these new models also bring SPACE Optimisation. The acronym stands for Speaker, Placement And Custom Environment, and means the system can be adjusted via a computer interface to compensate for the design, construction and furnishing of the listening room, and the position of speakers and listener within it. This has previously been available in full Exakt systems; but not only is the new version capable of a wider range of adjustment, it can also be used with a wider range of speakers beyond Linn's own past and present line-up, and with passive



speaker designs as well as active ones. So far SPACE optimisation is compatible with speakers from companies including Bowers & Wilkins, KEF, Kudos, Monitor Audio, ProAc, Quad and Spondor, and Linn says it's working to add more models and manufacturers to the list as quickly as possible. The new firmware can also be added to existing DS and DSM players via a network update.

New from UK-based Q Acoustics is a complete new 3000 Series speaker range **2**, sitting above the current 2000i Series models. As well as changes to drive units and crossovers, the new speakers feature cabinet improvements derived from the company's Concept Series models, including dual-layer front and top panels and 'pivotal' internal bracing designed to enhance strength and minimise resonance, thus reducing distortion. The speakers have new Concentric Ring Dome tweeters, designed to combine the benefits of both ring radiator and dome designs, and mounted in a butyl rubber housing, while the mid/bass drivers have been upgraded with a mix of paper and Kevlar in their cones. Available in Matte Graphite or American Walnut finishes as standard, the speakers can also be bought in lacquered gloss



white or black, or a leather effect finish. Prices start from £140 a pair for the 3010 compact standmount model in standard finishes, with premium finishes at £180 and leather effect at £190, and go up to the 3050 floorstander at £500/pr, or £650/pr in premium finishes or leather. Centre channel and subwoofer speakers are also available, and a 5.1-channel speaker package based around the 3010 is £700, or £900 in premium finishes or leather effect.

From Hong Kong-based MIPOW comes the Playbulb range **3**, which combines Bluetooth speakers with LED lighting: fit a Playbulb into any light fitting and you can send music to it from any Bluetooth device using a dedicated Playbulb X app for iOS and Android devices. The range starts at around £40 and the latest addition is the Playbulb colour, which allows the user to adjust the colour of the light and set a sleep or alarm timer as well as playing music.

More conventional is the latest version of the Exposure 3010 amplifier **4**, the 3010S2-D, which sells for £1700. It comes with six line-level inputs, one of which is a direct AV input for use with a home cinema system, but it can also be fitted with a range of optional modules to increase its flexibility. Buyers can choose between moving-magnet and moving-coil phono stages, selling for £240 apiece, or a built-in digital-to-analogue converter at £325, offering a choice of USB and BNC input, and with file compatibility up to 192kHz/24-bit and DSD64. The Exposure amplifier is available now, in black or silver. **6**

REVIEW PRODUCT OF THE MONTH

Classé Sigma SSP and AMP 2

Canadian company's more affordable AV system shines with music in stereo

The idea of products not quite being what they seem informed this review. Despite the £4250 Classé Sigma SSP being both a home cinema processor and a pre-amplifier, the company's claims that it's optimised for music playback led me to request a review sample, not with the company's Sigma Amp 5 five-channel power amplifier, which is the same price as the SSP, but with the £2950 Amp 2, a stereo design. Having attended Classé's initial UK demonstration of the products at the London office of parent company Bowers & Wilkins, where Classé CEO Dave Nauber played them purely in two-channel model with a pair of B&W Diamond 802D Series speakers, it seemed a very logical review to attempt.

So yes, the SSP is a pre-amplifier and surround processor but it lacks the complexity of some rival designs, with their rear panels crammed with socketry most people will never use. For example, Classé has sensibly assumed that very few of us are now using analogue video sources, so there's no duplication of the multiple HDMI inputs on component, composite or S-video. Similarly, the analogue audio inputs are limited to two sets of conventional stereo ins, plus one pair of balanced XLR sockets, although it's possible to set up the SSP to accept the input from a turntable using an optional phono module installed within the unit.

This modular approach also extends to the rest of the design, in that the digital signal processing and video boards are replaceable, allowing future formats to be



CLASSÉ SIGMA SSP

Type Pre-amplifier/surround processor

Price £4250

Inputs 8 HDMI (inc front-panel), 3 line-in (1 set XLR plus 2x RCA phonos), 3 coaxial and 2 optical digital, USB Type B for computer, iOS compliant USB-A on front panel

Outputs Eight channels of audio (front L/R channels on XLRs or RCAs), coaxial digital, HDMI

Other connections Ethernet, Classé CAN-BUS control in/out, infrared control in/out, RS232

Accessories supplied Remote handset, CAN-BUS termination plug

Dimensions (WxHxD) 43.3x9.5x37cm



CLASSÉ SIGMA AMP 2

Type Power amplifier

Price £2950

Power output 2x200W into 8 ohms

Inputs XLR and RCA

Outputs Two sets of combination terminals per channel

Other connections 12V trigger in/out, CAN-BUS in/out, infrared in/out, RS232, USB for firmware updates

Accessories supplied 12V trigger cable

Dimensions (WxHxD) 43.3x9.5x37cm

classeaudio.com

accommodated if required. For that reason the SSP doesn't yet have processing for the latest buzzword features in the home cinema arena such as 4K video and Dolby Atmos/Auro-3D/DTS:X sound: as Classé says, it's waiting to see how these formats shake down and will then offer suitable upgrades. For now, Classé says it's more concerned with optimising performance for the formats it does handle rather than second-guessing future standards – it can do these new formats but it wants to make sure it can do so reliably and consistently.

What the SSP does have is a good range of digital audio inputs, encompassing three coaxial, two optical, asynchronous USB on the rear panel for computers, a re-clocked

asynchronous USB on the front panel for iOS devices and the like, Ethernet for DLNA streaming, and AirPlay. In other words, it's perfectly equipped for modern music needs.

There's also a hefty dose of internal digital processing to deliver full digital bass management and nine-band parametric equalisation on all channels; but while the SSP has eight-channel output for suitable power amps, only the front left/right channels have outputs on balanced socketry. Why? Again it's about that optimisation for music in stereo, with Classé's boss explaining that the decision was made to deliver two very high-quality balanced outputs rather than compromise

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BOWERS & WILKINS CM9 S2 THEATRE SYSTEM

The Classé requires excellent speakers and the Bowers & Wilkins CM9 S2 Theatre system (£4750) is as impressive in stereo as it is in surround.



on lower-quality balanced outputs for all channels.

So the pre/pro is both fully loaded for modern musical requirements, handling files at up to 192kHz/24-bit (but not DSD, as the company doesn't believe there's any advantage in DSD over good hi-res PCM) and being controllable either with a refreshingly simple remote handset and the informative touchscreen display on the front panel, or a free iOS app on iPhones or iPads. The partnering power amplifier is similarly sophisticated.

As already mentioned, it's a Class D design, delivering 200W per channel, and uses proprietary switching technology to analyse and adjust the dead-band time – the minute fraction of a second during which the amplifier is off in the middle of its switching cycle – thus reducing the need

'This is a highly accomplished amplifier combination worthy of very serious consideration'

for negative feedback and requiring only filtering at the switching frequency, way beyond the audible band. As Nauber put it in his presentation, 'some dead-band time is needed, otherwise the amp will go into short-circuit and explode!' At start-up the amplifier detects what that point would be then backs off just a little, allowing dead-band time in the single digits of thousandths of a second. The result is a slimline, cool-running and well-behaved amplifier, despite the power on offer, and together the two components of this system manage to look both imposing and understated, not least thanks to exemplary fit and finish.

PERFORMANCE

Classé says its Sigma components will take no more than 72 hours' use to achieve initial break-in. I have to report, however, that the SSP/Amp 2 sounded excellent straight from the box and if there were any improvements over those first three days, they were so subtle as to be inaudible when I dipped in and out during 'warm-up'. Operation is smooth and logical once you get the hang of the layout of the touchscreen and the

programmable short-cut function keys, and the SSP is, as you might expect from an AV processor, hugely flexible when it comes to equalisation, bass management and so on.

The network streaming ability is of the 'play to' kind, meaning you have to use an external client to push music to the SSP, which functions purely as a renderer: I used PlugPlayer on iOS and Bubble UPnP on Android with equally satisfactory results. I don't find this method of working quite as intuitive as that in which the hardware acts as both client (organising playback) and renderer (converting the data stream into music), but that's probably just a matter of conditioning; the way the Sigma SSP does things will be entirely familiar to Linn users, for example.

Whether playing from disc, or streaming from a computer via USB or over the network, the Classé pairing lives up to its billing in being a very superior stereo amplifier combination one could buy purely for music, with the added surround capabilities as a pleasant bonus. The power available in the Amp 2 ensures excellent dynamics and substance to recordings such as the recent BBC NOW/ Søndergård Sibelius Second and Seventh Symphonies on Linn Records, where the presence of the orchestra is wonderfully developed, and the amplifier shows it's more than capable of very realistic volume levels while keeping things fully in control, at the same time giving the music plenty of room to breathe. Similarly, with smaller-scale music, from solo piano through to chamber ensembles, there's that reassuring sense of rightness about the Classés' sound: the combination has the power to drive speakers extremely well, yet controls them to give a highly informative view of what's being played without ever sounding over-analytical or as if the music is being held back. Above all, the way it plays music is hugely enjoyable.

What's beyond doubt is the detail on offer here, as is clear with The Tallis Scholars' latest recording for Gimell, 'Tintinnabuli', with its open and yet close-focused view of the voices. Via the Classés, each strand is easy to follow and rendered beautifully, and the overall effect is strikingly dramatic as well as being of real demonstration-quality standard.

Or you could try...

In searching for suitable rivals for the Classé Sigma pairing, I've limited myself to home-cinema amplifiers designed to offer an impressive level of performance when used for stereo, allowing a combined music and video system to be assembled. Of course, you could use a lesser AV receiver in combination with a stereo amplifier but here I've gone for all-in-one simplicity – well, almost!



Anthem MRX710

At £2199, the Anthem MRX710 is one of those rare AV receivers with truly excellent music performance. It's the upscale version of the MRX510 previously reviewed in these pages and delivers frill-free home cinema plus that remarkable stereo capability. A seven-channel design, it also allows you to reconfigure four of its channels to biampify suitable loudspeakers. For more information see anthemav.com or anthemavs.co.uk



Arcam AV950

Arcam's AV950 is the company's latest home cinema pre-amplifier/processor, again designed to shine in stereo and surround. It carries a £6000 price-tag, to which you'll have to add some more cash for a power amplifier. For stereo duties the obvious partner is the £3000 P49; for more channels, just add more of the same! arcam.co.uk

This is a highly accomplished amplifier combination and definitely worthy of very serious consideration – whether or not you want the surround capability on offer with the addition of a multichannel power amp. **G**

REVIEW ONKYO C-N7050

Bridging the gap between disc and network

Combination CD player and streamer mixes convenience with performance

How would you like your next-generation music playback served? Do you want to buy a standalone network music player to add to your existing system? Perhaps replace your current CD player/amplifier with an all-in-one solution? Or maybe a network pre-amplifier to which you can add a power amp?

All of those are established network music solutions but there's also an emerging alternative, in the form of combined CD/network players. Several Blu-ray players already offer this functionality: Yamaha's £300 CD-N301 was reviewed in the January issue, Arcam has recently added network capability to SACD/CD playback in the £800 CDS27 and Onkyo offers the player we have here, pitched at the same price as the Yamaha. Add in the ubiquity of home networks brought about by the ever-growing penetration of broadband and the fact that faster internet makes it more convenient to buy and download music at CD quality and beyond, and there's never been a better time to commit your music collection to a network system.

Trouble is, it's a bit of a faff, and those with big collections are in for the long haul when it comes to ripping hundreds – or maybe even thousands – of discs. And that's where components such as this Onkyo come in, allowing the playback of network-stored music from the off, while at the same time also looking after those CDs as yet unripped.

What we have here is a CD player with built-in Ethernet network streaming, able to access content stored on a computer/NAS drive on the same network, and also offer internet radio. What's more, it's ready for high-resolution music, too, being able to stream WAV and FLAC content at up to 192kHz/24-bit, Apple Lossless (or ALAC) at up to 96kHz/24-bit, and DSD2.8/5.6MHz (aka DSD64/DSD128). It also has an iPod/iPhone-compliant USB socket on the front panel and another USB on the rear to which a storage device could be connected.

Control is via a remote control handset, in conjunction with a reasonably clear display, or you can drive the whole thing – and a connected Onkyo amplifier – using the latest version of Onkyo's remote app, which is available for both iOS and Android smartphones and tablets.

SPECIFICATION

ONKYO C-N7050

Type CD/network music player

Price £300

Formats played CD, WAV/FLAC/ALAC to 192kHz/24-bit, ALAC to 96kHz/24-bit, MP3, WMA/WMA Lossless, Ogg Vorbis and AAC

Inputs Ethernet, two USB

Outputs Analogue stereo plus optical/coaxial digital

Accessories supplied Remote handset, Onkyo remote cable

Dimensions (WxHxD) 43.5x10.2x30.2cm

uk.onkyo.com

PERFORMANCE

Despite its flexibility and competitive pricing, the Onkyo is clearly built to perform. Fit and finish of casework and controls are extremely good, and designed to isolate the electronics and disc drive from vibration, while decoding is handled by a floating 32-bit DSP engine. The player uses a 32-bit Burr-Brown PCM1795 DAC from TI, and Onkyo's proprietary VLSC (Vector Linear Shaping Circuitry) is designed to eliminate high-frequency pulse noise for clearer performance, while smoothing the sound. The decoder, DAC and VLSC are all proven technologies: Onkyo uses them in its AV receivers to good effect.

'The Onkyo allows playback of network-stored music, while looking after those CDs as yet unripped'

The C-N7050 is simple to use as well. Aside from the odd operational quirk – it wouldn't play DSD files over my network when accessed using MinimServer on my NAS but worked fine with the NAS's built-in DLNA server software – it worked logically and smoothly, delivering gapless playback across the range of formats and responding perfectly to the control app.

As you might hope given Onkyo's past form in this respect, it performs extremely well as a CD player, even though it's almost as long ago as I can remember that I played a CD (as opposed to ripping

and streaming it). True, it's not going to challenge any of the remaining high-end CD players when it comes to sheer weight and detail-retrieval but, although it sounds a shade lightweight in absolute terms, it's more than up to the standards of CD players at around the same price, with an attractive combination of bass warmth, smoothness and yet a surprising amount of ambience and presence.

From chamber works to large-scale orchestral pieces, there's a generosity of sound here that's hard not to like, but at the same time good speed and definition, and that ability is carried through to the streaming of CD-quality content over the home network, and gains even more sparkle and vitality when good high-resolution recordings are played, right the way through to those refined and yet captivating double-DSD titles. Playing some of the very fine recordings to come out of the 2L label in DSD – worth noting when downloading that the Onkyo will play the .DSF variant of DSD but not the .DFF – I found myself especially impressed with the way the C-N7050 was able to convey the percussive nature of piano without overplaying things (as some components can), and also enjoyed the sense of space in the sound, which was nudging on the results achieved with much more expensive equipment.

Yes, you need a wired connection to your network music – but then trying to stream DSD5.6 over Wi-Fi was always going to be a fool's errand! – but beyond that, this is a well-realised bridge between physical and network music playback, and deserves to do very well. **G**



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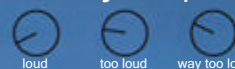
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● ESSAY

Is hi-fi slipping out of the audio industry's control?

Manufacturers are facing increasing demands to keep up with technological change

Once it was relatively easy to be a hi-fi manufacturer: you designed an amplifier or a CD player or whatever, packaged it into some casework ranging from utilitarian to exotic, set a price and hoped sufficient people would come forth to buy it. You knew what you were doing, because the design principles were well established, and for new technologies such as the arrival of CD, DVD or Blu-ray Disc, or even DAB radio, a kit of parts was available from a range of manufacturers around which you could construct your next model.

Even those companies wanting to venture into network players will find companies such as Austria-based StreamUnlimited ready to deliver turnkey packages around which a manufacture can just add its analogue circuitry and casework – well, almost! The kit even includes the display module, making it fairly simple to spot which products are based around these platforms, which include network/HDD playback, internet radio, AirPlay and Bluetooth all in one circuitboard. You'll find this platform in use in products such as the Musical Fidelity M1 CLiC, the Pro-ject StreamBox – and more than a few models higher up the audio price-range.

So that all seems very simple – but there's a problem. Once manufacturers were dealing with known quantities – a disc with music stored in closely defined formats, network streaming protocols such as that set by the Digital Living Network Alliance to ensure interoperability, or the standard output from a CD player or turntable cartridge. However, now there's a large and ever-growing range of file formats and protocols coming to the audio market, as companies better known for computers, mobile phones and even search engines strive to stake their claim.

New streaming services seem to be popping up left right and centre, to the extent that I am sure there will be even more by the time you read this, although



a high-end network music player? After all, isn't it basically a network-connected computer with some uprated audio circuitry on the end? Not quite: and the ongoing struggle to incorporate these new – and mutually incompatible – services in the face of ever more vociferous

Some network players, such as the Krell Connect, are built on a common streaming platform – but there are challenges in accommodating new online services

the exact availability will vary from market to market, despite the eventual global aspirations of these brands. Of late the long-established Spotify has been joined by Qobuz, of course, plus Tidal (with its promise of even higher-quality streaming through its alliance with the Meridian-developed MQA transport system), Deezer Elite and more, while at the time of writing rumours were again circulating that Apple was about to launch its own streaming

'Frankly, the range of streaming services is baffling to many but it just keeps on growing'

service in the wake of its purchase last year of headphones-and-more company Beats.

Frankly, the range of streaming services is baffling to many but it just keeps on growing, and there are signs that consumers are unhappy with the speed with which their chosen hi-fi brands seem able to respond to new developments. After all, we're all used to being able to add a new streaming service to our computer, tablet or smartphone with the download of a piece of software or an app, usually with a free trial or a limited version of the service it delivers thrown in. Pick up almost any computing device with a network connection and you can be listening to Spotify, Qobuz, Tidal or whatever within minutes.

So, the reasoning goes, why is it so difficult to do the same thing with

demand from users is testing the development resources and budgets of some of the big names in high-end audio. And as some have discovered with the recent shenanigans surrounding the BBC's internet radio streams – with a last-minute change of streaming system catching more than a few software engineers on the hop – what a manufacturer can do is increasingly at the behest of outside forces beyond its control.

It's no surprise, then, that these companies are cautious about what they introduce, and when. As Naim's Principal Software Engineer, Jon Green, told me: 'The key for us is to implement services really well and we have to be cautious of vendors where we are held to ransom by constant service code changes. We take updates very seriously and don't wish to be issuing huge numbers. It's very resource-heavy for us and a major inconvenience to our owners.' He says that while the company is keen to add options for its users, it wants to find partners able to implement a 'connect' type service, as it currently uses for Spotify.

As far as MQA is concerned, Green says that so far it's 'not a commercial reality', a view echoed by Linn's Technical Director, Keith Robertson. Speaking at the recent launch of the new DS products, he said: 'When MQA is both open and widely used, we will support it.'

While he did confirm that, having implemented Tidal, Linn has Qobuz next on its 'to do' list, he said: 'What is needed is a standard for streaming services, just as there is for the web. We need to find a way to get out of this lock-in nonsense.' That's a call I'm sure many other manufacturers would echo. ⑥

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NOTES & LETTERS

Remembering Peter Katin • A classic Gerontius online • Concierto en Flamenco

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Music and locomotives

Regarding the January playlist 'Planes, trains and automobiles' by Alexandra Coghlan, I would like to add that Honegger wasn't the only railway enthusiast. Dvořák often sent his pupils to the locomotive sheds to see what was going on, Walter Alcock – organist at Salisbury Cathedral – had a large railway in his garden and could often be seen at some of the big London terminals talking to the locomotive crews, and Hindemith had a large HO gauge layout in his loft. Roger Iain Mason, L/CPL Regimental Band of the Yorkshire Regiment, via email

An elusive Gerontius

I have just viewed on YouTube a 1968 performance of Elgar's *The Dream of Gerontius*, with Sir Adrian Boult, the LPO and LPO Chorus, Peter Pears, Janet Baker and John Shirley-Quirk, done at Canterbury Cathedral – a BBC telecast. The recording varies in quality from quite good to very poor, and I wonder if there is somewhere in someone's vault a copy good enough to be issued on DVD? I thought Peter Pears's performance was as fine as any I have heard from him, in any role, live or on recording, and Janet Baker and John Shirley-Quirk were both excellent in their roles.

David R Hoffman
Harrisburg, PA, USA

Concierto en Flamenco

I enjoyed William Yeoman's review of a CD dedicated to the music of Federico Moreno Torroba (April, page 60). However, this is not the first recording of the *Concierto en Flamenco*. The magnificent flamenco guitarist Sabicas (1912-90) made the first recording of this very unusual work as the dedicatee, conducted by the composer himself, who conducts the Orquesta de Camara de Madrid (1962). Sabicas is an incredibly masterly artist, and he also performs four further guitar solos on the album. This recording [available on Youtube and iTunes] is essential for anyone who loves the playing of Sabicas, beautiful guitar music and the wonderful melodic compositions of Federico Moreno Torroba.

Hal A Lingerman, via email

Letter of the Month

The irreplaceable Peter Katin



Sensational: Katin's performance of Rachmaninov's Third Concerto at the Proms made his name

Your very fair obituary in May (page 123) of Peter Katin evoked happy memories. In 1953, shortly before his sensational Proms debut with Rachmaninov's Third Piano Concerto, he visited my school in Cambridge to give three recitals. Each included one or more works which later became Katin signature pieces, including Bach's Chromatic Fantasia and Fugue, Debussy's *Suite bergamasque*, Brahms's *Handel Variations*, Liszt's *Dante Sonata* and Chopin's B minor Sonata. He returned to the school several times and made friends with a brilliant English teacher who also taught music and owned a beautifully restored 1791 Broadwood square piano which Katin tried. I like to think it may have sparked his lifelong interest in early pianos.

I heard him play often over the years, including a Brahms D minor Concerto in which he stood in for the dying Julius Katchen, and a Schubert

Piano Sonata No 21, D960, at the Queen Elizabeth Hall which for honest expressiveness and beauty of tone equalled any I have ever heard. It is true that in middle age and after teaching in Canada he dropped out of the big league, but that was certainly not due to lack of quality – more likely he had tired of the effort needed to get the big dates. He continued to give occasional recitals at the Wigmore Hall which drew loyal audiences, and was also a lively and perceptive writer on music – his booklet-note for a Music & Arts issue of public performances of Mozart concertos by Myra Hess is a collector's piece. Peter Katin was a musician's pianist, the type of serious and generous artist who is the bedrock of any musical culture. His many recordings remain, and perhaps in time he will be reappraised at his true value.

Michael Johnson
London N6

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Please send letters responding to articles in this issue for consideration for publication in the July issue by May 26. Gramophone reserves the right to edit all letters for publication.

PRESTO
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OBITUARIES

A record company founder and producer; a leading classical music critic

BRIAN COUZENS

*Founder/producer of Chandos Records
Born January 17, 1933
Died April 17, 2015*



Chandos Records is today one of the leading independent classical music labels – not just in Britain, but internationally – and that is the finest

tribute that can be paid to its founder, Brian Couzens, who has died, aged 82, following a short illness.

The Colchester-based record label was founded in 1979, and as it grew, Couzens's instincts in both the musical and business dimensions of running a label proved to be inspired (and boldly followed). This is no better illustrated than when, back in 1986, he was visited by two representatives of the Oslo Philharmonic who asked whether he'd be interested in recording them: he took away a cassette of their recent performance of Tchaikovsky's Fifth Symphony, and the next morning agreed to record the complete cycle. The conductor was the then far-from-household-name Mariss Jansons.

Other conductors whose extensive recordings for Chandos remain leading choices in the catalogue include Neeme Järvi and Richard Hickox, while artists including Lydia Mordkovitch, Louis Lortie, the Borodin Trio and Raphael Wallfisch were all nurtured by Chandos to the enrichment of listeners then and now; Brian would act as producer, his son Ralph (who continues to lead the company today) as engineer. It was a fine team which earned them a host of *Gramophone* Awards for recordings including Bax's Symphony No 4 (Engineering and Production, 1984), Prokofiev's Symphony No 6 (Orchestral, 1985), Respighi's *Belkis, Queen of Sheba* (Engineering and Production, 1986), Hummel's piano concertos (Concerto, 1987), Shostakovich's violin concertos (Concerto, 1990), Britten's *War Requiem* (Choral and Engineering, 1992), Dutilleux's symphonies (Engineering, 1994), Delius's *Songs of Farewell* (Choral, 1994), Dyson's *The Canterbury Pilgrims* (Engineering, 1997), and Vaughan Williams's *A London Symphony* (Orchestral and Record of the Year, 2001).

Couzens's instincts made Chandos an 'early adopter' of digital recording techniques and one of the first independents to sign up to CD, way back in 1983. This Chandos spirit is continued today under the leadership of Brian's son Ralph by the label's embracing of downloading as a way of delivering the highest quality sound files to the widest possible audiences, and by the support of some of today's most impressive artists, including conductors Edward Gardner, Sir Andrew Davis and Gianandrea Noseda, pianist Jean-Efflam Bavouzet and violinists James Ehnes and Jennifer Pike.

Couzens received a Special Achievement Award at the 2010 *Gramophone* Awards for his services to recorded music.

ANDREW PORTER

*Music critic
Born August 26, 1928
Died April 3, 2015*

Andrew Porter, one of the most influential music critics of the 20th

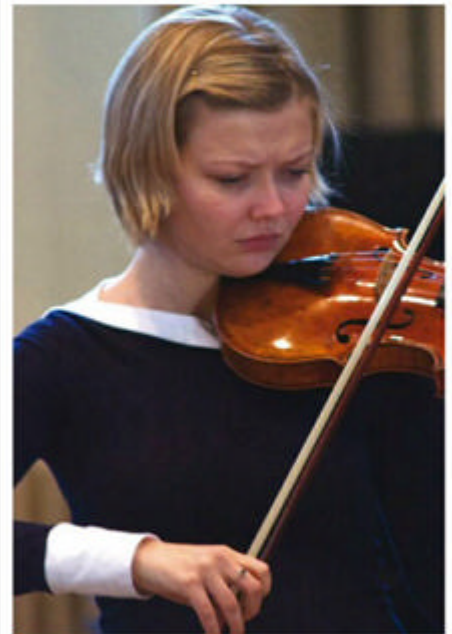


century and a long-term *Gramophone* contributor, has died at the age of 86. Porter joined *Gramophone's* roster in the early 1950s following recommendations from Desmond Shawe-Taylor and Edward Sackville-West.

Porter's English mother, when a young woman, had considered becoming a professional singer. But she gave up this career before it had even begun, by marrying a South African and going to live with him in Cape Town. Here, Porter was born. He began to play the piano at an early age and was educated at Diocesan College, where he had the good fortune to be taught by Claude Brown, who had known Elgar well. At the age of 18 he gained an organ scholarship at University College, Oxford. Here his musical centre shifted to opera. At the same time that Porter joined *Gramophone*, he also became music critic of the *Financial Times* and *Opera*. In the early 1970s Porter started writing for *The New Yorker* and soon became the most widely respected music critic in the US.

To read these obituaries, and others, in full, visit gramophone.co.uk/news

NEXT MONTH
JULY 2015



Celebrating the Proms artists of 2015

Violinist Alina Ibragimova on her two late-night Bach concerts and a new recording of Ysayë, and conductor Andrew Litton on his Bergen Philharmonic turning 250 – plus we talk to other musicians involved in the 2015 BBC Proms

Hailing Bruno Walter

Richard Osborne recalls the gifts of the German-born maestro

Rachmaninov's Etudes-Tableaux

Bryce Morrison surveys the available recordings of the Op 39

Bingen debated

Two critics weigh up Hyperion's *A Feather on the Breath of God*

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Cathy Newman

The Channel 4 News anchor on mastering the Bruch G minor Violin Concerto and sharing her love of classical music with her two daughters

My parents were teachers. My mum decided that my sister and I should be given the chance to play an instrument – perhaps because she'd never been given that chance herself. So she started me off on the piano, but I found it quite hard. One day my dad brought home a violin from the school he taught at, so I picked it up and had a go. I must have been four or five, something like that.

I learned locally at first, then my mum would drive me up to London every Monday night for lessons, which was quite a labour of love. I had a brilliant teacher, Dona Lee Croft, who taught at the Royal College of Music. She's this amazing Texan redhead; so warm and passionate as a person. I learnt so much from her about the importance of feeling the music. In my late teens I learned the Bruch G minor Concerto with Dona. I absolutely love that piece, I guess it was my showpiece really – the pinnacle of my career! My dad always had a dream that I would play the Beethoven Concerto but I never quite made it. The Tchaikovsky Concerto defeated me too. I've got to learn it properly before I die!

I started going to Pro Corda, the chamber music holiday group run by these two amazing, dynamic old ladies in a beautiful setting in Suffolk. I was homesick at first but it became a feature of my life. I made great friends, some of whom have gone on to be professionals playing at a really high standard – Simon Blendis was one of them, now the violinist in the Schubert Ensemble.

I almost went to the Yehudi Menuhin School – I auditioned and they told me to come back the next year – but then I saw Kate Adie on the television and thought, 'That's the job for me'. I suppose there was a fork in the road and I abandoned all thoughts of being a violinist. I ended up studying English, and sang in the Oxford Schola Cantorum. I'd always done a lot of singing at school but Schola was just the most incredible experience; everybody in that group was so musical.

After university I managed to get a job as a researcher on *The Independent*, then went to *Media Week* where I really learnt how to be a reporter, and from there I went to Westminster as a political reporter for the *Financial Times* and eventually to ITN. Perhaps something about the discipline of musical performance prepares you for live television. There's a great team here at Channel 4 News, vibrant and close-knit. We're quite a musical bunch, too – Jon Snow plays the piano and sings, Krishnan Guru-Murthy plays the guitar and our economics editor Paul Mason has a musical past that you know about (*My Music*, 5/14).

We go on air at 7pm so it's hard to get to concerts. But I saw Joshua Bell play the Bruch at the Proms last summer; I took




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Tchaikovsky Violin Concerto
Jascha Heifetz *vn* Chicago Symphony Orchestra /
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I won this record as a prize at a music festival I did – I'd never heard a violin sound like that before.

my eldest daughter along. Incredible. He puts so much into a performance – he really throws himself into it physically, which you can't get from a recording. I remember seeing Anne-Sophie Mutter play when I was growing up, and being surprised at how energised she was. I hadn't seen anything like that before; we'd been taught to stand quite still.

It was a while ago now, but I have the most vivid memory of seeing Alfred Brendel play the *Emperor* Concerto at the Proms too. That slow movement...well, the atmosphere was intense. I don't understand how he can make the piano sound invested with such emotion. I want the slow movement of the *Emperor* Concerto at my funeral; my husband has already been instructed!

I'm actually very glad I didn't go into music professionally, because now I'm able to enjoy it. I think it can be a tough life playing in an orchestra, and I'd never have made it to the top. But both my daughters play the violin. I suppose I thought it was something I could give them as a working mum – a skill I could pass on. If they were playing the clarinet, I wouldn't have a clue about how to help them. And I notice my eldest daughter really throwing herself into the music – perhaps like Mutter did. And that's really good, isn't it? 

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